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By Walter Besant.

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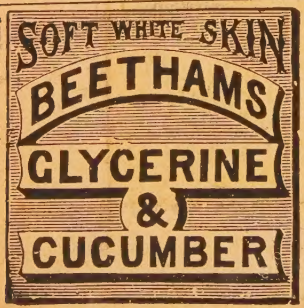

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THE WORLD WENT VERY WELL THEN

BY

WALTER BESANT

AUTHOR OF

'ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN' 'DOROTHY FORSTER'
'CHILDREN OF GIBEON' ETC.

A NEW EDITION

London
CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY
1891

PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON

TO

JOHN PETTIE, R.A.

I dedicate this book, in memory of certain pleasant hours passed in Fitzjohn's Avenue in November 1886, *and in acknowledgment of the patience and skill of the Artist.*

WALTER BESANT

United University Club,
Feb. 1887.

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PREFACE.

I BEG to express my best thanks to Mr. William Ingram, who nas most generously placed at my disposal, for reproduction, some of the drawings made originally for the 'Illustrated London News,' where this story first appeared. I have also to thank Mr. Charles Eden for kindly pointing out and correcting for me certain slips due to the fact that the writer of this narrative, Luke Anguish, was a landsman, though a painter of ships.

Those who wish to know the foundation of the story will find it in the Chronicles of Deptford, and on a tombstone in the Church of St. Nicholas.

I desire also to be allowed a word of personal explanation. Many people have written to me asking how I can write two novels at once, because during the time that this tale was running in the 'Illustrated London News,' the 'Children of Gibeon' was concluding in 'Longman's Magazine.' I cannot, as a matter of fact, write two novels at once, and I should be very much afraid to try such an experiment. The following are the facts and dates:

In October 1883 I finished the story of 'Dorothy Forster,' which was published in the 'Graphic,' January–June 1884, and by Messrs. Chatto and Windus in May 1884.

On the completion of 'Dorothy Forster' I began the 'Children of Gibeon,' which occupied me until May 1885. In the summer of 1885 I began 'The World went very Well then.' The first half of this was sent in to Mr. Ingram in April of 1886, and the rest in June. So far, therefore, from writing two novels at once, the two which ran partly at the same time were written quite separately, the first taking eighteen months and the second about thirteen months.

W. B.

CONTENTS.

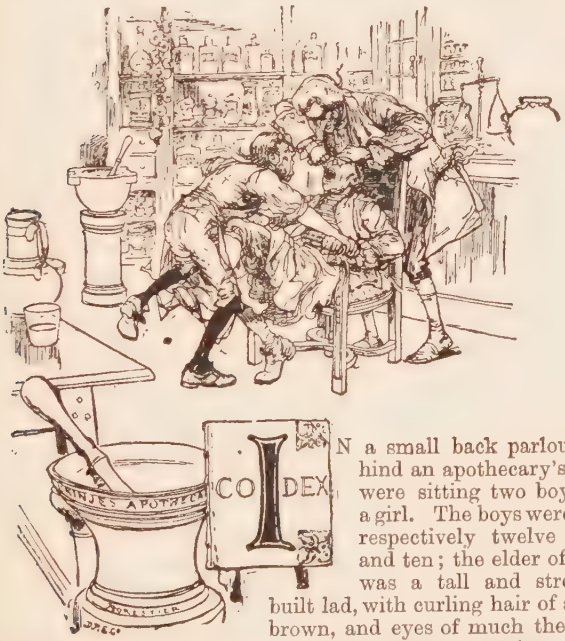
CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	HOW JACK HEARD TALK OF LANDS BEYOND THE SEA	1
II.	HOW JACK CAME TO DEPTFORD	13
III.	HOW JACK LEARNED OF THE PENMAN	27
IV.	HOW JACK FIRST WENT TO SEA	34
V.	MIDSHIPMAN JACK	39
VI.	THE 'COUNTESS OF DORSET'	46
VII.	MR. BRINJES CONCLUDES THE STORY OF HIS VOYAGE	59
VIII.	THE 'COUNTESS OF DORSET' SAILS	65
IX.	AARON FLETCHER	71
X.	HOW JACK CAME HOME AGAIN	74
XI.	THE VOYAGE OF THE 'COUNTESS OF DORSET'	86
XII.	HOW JACK THANKED BESS	100
XIII.	JACK ASHORE	104
XIV.	THE MEDDLESOME ASSISTANT	111
XV.	HORN FAIR	118
XVI.	IN THE SUMMER-HOUSE	132
XVII.	IN BUTCHER'S ROW	139
XVIII.	A DARK NIGHT'S JOB	145
XIX.	IN THE CRIMP'S HOUSE	152
XX.	OF JACK'S ESCAPE	158
XXI.	A RUDE AWAKENING	164
XXII.	THE PRIVATEERS	174
XXIII.	A SAILOR'S CHARM	179
XXIV.	AFTER JACK'S DEPARTURE	187
XXV.	LIEUTENANT AARON FLETCHER	195
XXVI.	HOW MR. BRINJES EXERCISED HIS POWERS	199
XXVII.	IN COMMAND	204
XXVIII.	HOW BESS LISTENED FOR HIS STEP	208
XXIX.	'HE HATH SUFFERED A SEA CHANGE'	215
XXX.	ALAS! POOR BESS!	221

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXXI.	AN AMBASSADOR OF LOVE	226
XXXII.	HOW THE APOTHECARY DID HIS BEST	233
XXXIII.	AN INTERESTING CASE	238
XXXIV.	HOW CASTILLA WAS BETROTHED	243
XXXV.	HOW PHILADELPHY KEPT THE SECRET	245
XXXVI.	HOW BESS WENT OUT OF HER WITS	249
XXXVII.	HOW BESS RECOVERED HER SENSES	257
XXXVIII.	HOW PHILADELPHY REFUSED A BRIBE	263
XXXIX.	HOW BAD NEWS CAME HOME	267
XL.	HOW THE NEWS WAS RECEIVED	274
XLI.	HOW THE 'CALYPSO' CAME HOME AGAIN	280
XLII.	OF THE COURT-MARTIAL	287
XLIII.	AFTER THE COURT-MARTIAL	299
XLIV.	HOW BESS WENT AWAY	304
XLV.	THE CONCLUSION	311

THE WORLD WENT VERY WELL THEN.

CHAPTER I.

HOW JACK HEARD TALK OF LANDS BEYOND THE SEA



IN a small back parlour, behind an apothecary's shop, were sitting two boys and a girl. The boys were aged respectively twelve years and ten; the elder of them was a tall and strongly-built lad, with curling hair of a dark brown, and eyes of much the same colour the younger, fair-haired, and of slighter proportions. The girl was nine; but she looked more, being tall for her age. Her hair was so dark that it looked almost black. It hung loose,

in long curls or ripples, not being coarse and thick, as happens, generally, with hair that is quite black, but fine in texture and lustrous to look upon. Her eyes, too, were black and large. The elder boy and the girl sat side-by-side in the window-seat, while the other boy sat at the table, having a pencil in his hand and a piece of paper before him, on which he was drawing, idly, whatever came into his head. All three were silent, save that the elder boy from time to time whispered the girl, or pinched her ear, or pulled her hair, when she would shake her head and smile, and point to the great chair beside the fire, as much as to say, 'If it were not for that chair, Jack, and the person in it, I would box thy ears.'

It was not a cold day. The sun shone through the lattice window, and fell upon the heads of the two who sat together, and motes innumerable danced merrily in the light; yet there was a coal fire burning in the grate. On one hob simmered a saucepan, with some broth in it or compound of simples (while the children sat waiting, the apothecary's assistant stepped in noiselessly, lifted the lid, took out a spoonful, sighed, tasted it, shook his head for the nastiness of it, and went back into the shop). On the other hob stood a kettle, singing comfortably—kept there always, day and night, but not for making tea, I promise you. As for the room itself, it was exactly like a ship's cabin, being narrow and low, and fitted with shelves and drawers. On one side was a pallet, something like a bunk in an officer's cabin, with a flock mattress upon it, and a pair of blankets rolled up snug. Here the apothecary slept when the weather was cold—that is to say, nearly all the year round. Herbs and drugs tied in bundles hung from the rafters, as onions hang in a farm-house; the window was a lattice, with small diamond panes set in lead; above the mantel-shelf hung a silver watch; on the shelf itself stood a pair of brass candlesticks, the model of a ship full rigged—her name written in red ink on a wooden stand, 'The King Solomon, of Bristol'—a pair of ship's pistols, a tobacco jar, and two or three long pipes. The apothecary's great wig, which he wore every evening at the club, hung from a peg on the wall behind the elbow chair; and in the corner of the room opposite the chair there was a very fearful and terrible thing, until you grew accustomed to it, when you ceased to fear it. This was nothing less than a stick painted red and black, with bright-coloured feathers tied round it, and surmounted by a grinning human skull. It was a magic stick, called, we were told, the Ekpenyong, or skull-stick, by the Mandingo sorcerers—a thing only to be handled by an Obeah man, the possession of which is supposed by negroes either to confer or to proclaim wonderful powers, and cut from a juju or holy tree. Beside it lay two musical instruments, also from Africa—one a hollow block of wood covered with a sheepskin, and the other a kind of rude guitar. This stick it was which caused the apothecary to be greatly respected by the Admiral's negroes, as you will presently hear. He who has such

a stick can catch the shadow, as they say—that is, the soul of a man; and set Obi upon him—that is to say, bring suffering, sorrow, and shame upon him. So that the possessor of a skull-stick is a person greatly to be feared and envied.

There was an open cupboard beside the fire, in which were household stores, such as bacon, cheese, butter, bread, strings of onions, a two-gallon jar or firkin of rum, plates and knives, for the room was a kitchen as well as an eating-room and a sleeping-room. Once a week or so, if business was slack and there was nothing else to do, the assistant might, if he thought of it, come with a broom, and sweep the dust out into the street. But I do not remember that the room was ever washed. And what with the tobacco, the stores in the cupboard, the rum, the drugs hanging from the rafters, and the contents of the shelves, the place had, to a sailor, exactly the smell of the cockpit or orlop deck after a long voyage; for in that part of the ship are kept the purser's stores, the bo's'n's stores, the spirit-room, the surgeon's store-room, the midshipmen's berths and their mess. For this reason, perhaps, its owner, who had been a sailor, would never open the window; and always, on returning home, sniffed the air of the room with a peculiar satisfaction.

The great chair—which might have served for the chair of a hall-porter, having a broad, low seat and a high back with arms—was stuffed or padded with three or four pillows, and in the midst of the pillows lay an old man sleeping. This was Mr. Brinjes, the famous apothecary of Deptford. He was small of stature and thin: his face (over one eye was a black patch) was creased and lined like a russet apple, which shrinks before it rots; his chin was hollow; his head, covered with a padded silk night-cap, was sunk deep in the pillows like a child's; he lay upon his side; his feet, stretched out, were propped on a footstool; one hand was under his cheek, and the other hung over the arm of the chair (you might have noticed that the skin of his hand was wrinkled and loose, as if the bones belonged to an occupant smaller than was at first intended). As he lay asleep there, he looked like one in extreme old age, such as may be seen in country villages, where they take a pride in showing the visitor, in proof of the healthiness of the country air, some old gaffer of a hundred years and more sitting before a fire.

Through the open door could be seen the shop. It was small, like the parlour behind it. The rafters were hung with dried herbs; the shelves were full of bottles. There was a chair for the reception of those patients who could not stand; there was a counter, with scales great and small; a pestle and mortar; a box containing surgical instruments—the pincers for pulling out teeth, the cup, the basin, the blister, and the other horrid tools of the surgeon's craft. The apothecary's assistant stood at the counter, rolling pills and mixing medicines—a sallow, pasty-faced youth with a pair of swivel eyes, which moved with independent action; a young man who walked about without noise, and worked all day without

stopping, yet looked discontented, perhaps because he was compelled to taste the medicines, and his stomach kicked thereat. The shop door was always open, for the window gave little light, partly because it was never cleaned, partly because there was a shelf with bottles before it, and partly because the glass was full of bull's-eyes, which gave strength, no doubt, yet kept the room obscure. At the end of the counter was the stool on which Mr. Brinjes sat every morning, in his gown and night-cap, from eight o'clock until half-past twelve, receiving patients. Before him, on the counter, was a great book containing, I now suppose, a Repertory or Collection of Instructions concerning Symptoms of Diseases and Methods of Treatment; but the common sort always supposed that it was a book of Spells, and the means by which Mr. Brinjes was enabled to communicate with a Certain Potentate, who helped him and did his bidding, at what price and for what reward these people freely whispered to each other. On Sunday morning (this must have been a bitter Bolus to the Evil one) Mr. Brinjes and his assistant let blood gratis to whoever wished for that wholesome refreshment; and every morning he pulled out teeth at a shilling or half a crown (according to the means of the customer), his assistant holding the patient in his chair, and receiving those kicks and cuffs which in the extremity of his agony the sufferer too often deals out.

In such a town as Deptford it is natural that the common people should resort to the herb-woman for the cure of their ailments. It was not until she had failed that they came to Mr. Brinjes, and then with doubt whether he would choose to treat them. As for his power to cure, if he pleased, there was no doubt about that. It was whispered that he knew of charms by which he could constrain a person, even in the misery of toothache, to fall sound asleep, and continue asleep while Mr. Brinjes would take out a tooth without causing him to awaken, or to feel any pain whatever; but these things we may not believe, however well authenticated, unless we would seriously accuse him of magic. As for fevers, rheumatisms, difficulty of breathing, coughs, scurvy, and the other afflictions by which we are reminded that this is but a transitory world, it was believed, even by the better sort of Deptford, that there was no physician in London itself more skilful than Mr. Brinjes, and that by certain preparations, the secret of which he alone knew, and had learned in his voyages in foreign parts, especially on the West Coast of Africa, where the negroes possess many strange secrets of nature, he had acquired a singular mastery over every kind of disease. He has been known, as I myself who write this history can testify (it was in the case of Admiral Sayer's great toe), to relieve a man in one hour of the gout, though he had been roaring for a fortnight with his foot tied up in flannel. It was also whispered of Mr. Brinjes that by magic or witchcraft he could bring diseases upon those who offended him, and that he could avert all the misfortunes to which mankind are liable in shipwreck, drowning, wounds, and death. But it is idle to repeat the things

which were said of him. Certain it is that he possessed wonderful secrets for the cure of disease, however he came by them. Warts he removed merely by looking at them, and by a prophecy that they would be gone in so many days; a sprained ankle he would set at ease by simply rubbing the part with his open hand; sciatica, lumbago, pleurisy, and other such disorders he healed in the same way, foretelling on each occasion how long it would be before the malady would cease. Those who were so treated declared that the apothecary's hand became like a red-hot iron in the rubbing. Rheumatism, it was certain, he cured by making the patient carry a potato in his pocket; though what he did, if he did anything, to the potato first, in order to endow it with this virtue, is not known. As for earache, faceache, toothache, tic, and such disorders, it was believed that he could order their removal at will. Further, it was said of him, that he could, also at will, command these diseases to seize upon a man and torture him. How he did this, no one can explain; but the testimony of many, still living, proves that he did it. I pass over the report that, in calling these pains to seize upon a man, his one eye glowed like a red-hot coal, and sent forth flashes of fire. Such rumours show only how much he was feared and respected by the people. They came to him also for amulets and charms, which he did not always refuse to give, for protecting those who carried them from drowning, hanging, burning, the shot of cannon, and the stroke of steel. It is true that his amulets were simple things: we cannot understand how the tooth of a snake, even with the poison in it, can avail against drowning if one who cannot swim should tumble into deep water; nor how the head of a frog, wrapped in silk, can, without any other magic, protect a man against the gallows. But there are many other things, which everybody believes, quite as difficult to explain; as, for instance, why the gall of the barbel causeth blindness; why cock ale cureth consumption; why an onion hung round the neck of a beast, and the next day boiled and buried, cureth distemper in cattle; or why the finger cut from the hand of a hanged man taketh away a wen. Yet these are in the nature of amulets, as much as any of those prepared by Mr. Brinjes. At this time he had been in the town some fifteen years, having appeared one day about the year 1725. Nobody knew who he was or whence he came; his parentage, his Christian name, his birthplace were all unknown. He never spoke of any relations; and at his first coming he seemed to be as old as now, so that some, when they saw the sign of the Silver Mortar put up, and the gallipots ranged in the shop, laughed to think of so old and decrepit a man beginning trade as an apothecary.

Whatever his age, he was not decrepit; but strong and hale, though shrunken in figure, with a wrinkled skin and a face covered with lines and crow's-feet. He suffered from no ailments, was always brisk and active, and had, in his talk and understanding, no apparent touch of age. Further, it soon became known that here

was a man who could effect marvellous cures, so that the people began to flock to him, not only from Deptford and the riverside, where he first courted custom, but also from Greenwich, on the one hand, and Redriff, Bermondsey, and Southwark, on the other.

He received these people every day—from eight in the morning until half-past twelve—dressed in a ragged old gown, gone into holes at the elbows, and well-nigh dropping to pieces; on his head, an old night-cap; and on his feet, slippers tied with tape. But slovenly as was his dress, and unworthy the dignity of a physician, he was sharp and quick with the patients, telling them plainly, while he gave them medicine, whether they would recover or when they would die, and whether he could help them or no. At the stroke of half-past twelve, he got off his stool and retired to his parlour, where, with his own hand, he every day fried or griddled a great piece of beef-steak, with a mess of onions, carrots, and other vegetables, and presently devoured it, with a tankard of black beer, choosing to do everything with his own hand, even to the filling of his kettle and the washing of his dishes, rather than have a woman-servant in the place. This done, he made up the fire, put away his plates, settled himself among his pillows, and fell fast asleep. Thus he continued for two or three hours, no one daring to disturb him or to make the least noise. When, on this day, he began to move, stretching out first one leg, and then the other, turning over on his back, and fidgeting with his hands, the elder boy nodded to the younger, who reached a bundle of papers from the topmost shelf, and laid them on the table as if in readiness. This done, they waited.

The old man yawned, sighed, and opened his remaining eye—'twas a pale blue eye of amazing keenness and brightness. Then he sat up suddenly with a start, and looked about him with a quick suspicious glance, as if he had been sleeping in some place where there were wild animals to fear, or savage men. You could then perceive that his features were sharp, and apparently not much altered by his years; his chin being long and pointed, his lips firm, and his nose straight, as if he was a masterful man, who would have his way. As for his remaining eye (no one ever learned where the sight of the other had been lost), though it was so bright, it had a quick and watchful expression, such as may be perceived in the eyes of those creatures who both hunt and are hunted. You will not see this look in the eyes of Dido the Lioness of the Tower; because the lion hunts but is never hunted. Being reassured as to tigers or fierce Indians, Mr. Brinjes rose from the chair, and as if not yet wholly awake, yet already conscious, he took a glass and half filled it with rum; then, with the utmost care and nicety (your drinkers of rum-punch care very little how much rum is in the glass, but are greatly afraid of putting in too much of the other components), added sugar, lemon, and water; this done, he stirred the contents, rolled it about in the glass, and drank half of it.

'I have again returned,' he said, 'to the world of life. To all of

us who are old, when we close our eyes in sleep we know not whether we shall not keep them closed in death, which sometimes thus surprises those who have lived long. But I have returned—aha!—and with reasonable prospect of another evening of tobacco and punch.' Here he sipped his liquor. 'I take this glass of punch, boys,' he explained, 'for the good of the stomach, and the prevention of ill-humours and vapours; otherwise these might rise to the brain, which is a part of man's mechanism more delicate than any other, and as easily put off the balance as the mainspring of a watch.' Here he drank again, but slowly, and by sips, as becomes one who loves his drink. 'I am now old; when a man is old, he is fortunate if he can breathe free, sleep sound, walk upright, eat his dinner, and still drink his punch. Some men there are, not so old as myself—no, not by ten years—who fetch their breath with difficulty, whereas I breathe freely; others are troubled and cannot sleep for racking pains, whereas I have none; and others cannot eat strong meats, and would die—poor devils!—of a bowl of punch. Better be dead than live like that; better lie buried with a mile of blue water over your head, and the whales flopping around your grave on the seaweed. There can be no more comfortable and quiet lying than the bottom of the sea.' He shook his head solemnly. 'When a man cannot any longer fight and make love, there is but one thing left to rejoice his heart.' He finished the glass. 'And when he cannot drink, let him die.'

He sat down again in his great chair; but he sat upright, looking about him, now thoroughly awake and alert.

'In sleep,' he said, 'it is as if one were already dead; awake, it is as if one could not die. Ha! Death is impossible. The blood it runs as strong, the pulse it beats as steady, as when I was a boy of thirty. Why, I am young still! I am full of life! Give me fifty years more—only a poor, short fifty years—what is it when the time is gone?—and I will make, look you, such a medicine as shall keep a man alive for ever! It will be done some day, alas! when I am gone. It will be too late for me, and I must die. But not yet—not yet. Oh! we are born too soon—a hundred years and more too soon. When a man is old he is apt to feel the near presence of Death. Not, mind you, when he is asleep, or when he is awake, but when he is between the two. Then he sees the dart aimed at his heart, and the scythe ready to cut him down, and the bony fingers clutching at his throat. It is as if life were slipping from him, just as the pirate's plank slips under the weight of the prisoner who has to walk upon it.'

'When a man's time comes,' said Jack, with wisdom borrowed from his friends at Trinity Hospital; 'when a man's time comes, down he goes.'

'Ay. It's easy talking when you are young; and your time hasn't come by many a day; the words drop out glib, and seem to mean nothing. Wait, my lad; wait till you have had your day. To every man his day. First the fat time, then the lean time; or

else it's first the lean time, then the fat time. For most, old age is the lean time. But the world is full of justice, and there is always a fat time in every man's life. When there's peace upon the seas, the merchantman sails free and happy, buying skins and ivory, spices and precious woods, for glass beads and cotton. So trade prospers. And then the King's sailors and marines and the privateers must needs turn smugglers; and so find their way to the gallows. Then cometh war again, and the honest fellows have another turn with fighting and taking of prizes and cutting out of convoys. Yes, boys; the world is full of justice, did we but rightly consider; and everyone doth get his chance. As for you, Bess, my girl, it shall be a brave lover, in the days when thou shalt be a lovely girl and a goddess. As for you, boys—well—and presently you will become old men like unto me.' He sighed heavily. 'And then'—he took the saucepan from the hob, stirred it about, and smelled the stuff that was simmering in it—'I doubt if this mixture ——Children, we are all born a hundred years too soon—a hundred years, at least. Yet, if I had but fifty years before me, I think I could find the secret to stay old age and put off natural decay. The Coromantyns are said to have the secret, but they keep it to themselves; and I have questioned Philadelphy, who is a Mandingo, in vain. Well'—again he sighed, as he put back his saucepan—'I have slept, and I am alive again, with another evening before me, and more punch. Let us be thankful. Jack, unroll the charts, and let me look upon the world again.'

The charts, which the younger boy had already laid upon the table, were stained and thumb-marked parchments, originally drawn by some Spanish hand, for the names were all in Spanish; but they had been much altered and corrected by a later hand—perhaps that of Mr. Brinjes himself. They showed the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans, together with a map of the Eastern Islands and the unknown Magellanica or Terra Australis. The last named was traversed by several lines in blue ink, showing the routes of voyagers both early and recent, each with a name written above it; as Magellans, 1520; Francis D'Ovalle, 1582; Mendana, 1595; Drake, 1577; Candish, 1586; Oliver Noort, 1599; Le Maire, 1615; Tasman, 1642; John Cook, 1683; Woodes Rodgers, 1708; Clipperton, 1719; Shelvocke, at the same time. There was another route laid down across the ocean, much more devious than any of the others, and without name, and marked in red ink.

When these maps were spread out upon the table, Mr. Brinjes rose and stood gazing upon them, as if, by the mere contemplation of the coast lines, he was enabled actually to see the places which he had visited or heard of. There was no place in the whole world that is visited by ships (because I do not pretend that Mr. Brinjes knew the interior of the great continents) whereof he could not speak as from personal knowledge, describing its appearance, the character of the people, the soundings, and the nature of the port or roadstead.

But mostly Mr. Brinjes loved to talk of pirates, rovers, or adventurers, whether of Queen Elizabeth's reign, when they had a golden time indeed, or of our own time, which has seen many of these gentry; though now, instead of receiving knighthood, as was formerly the custom, they are generally taken ashore and hoisted on a gibbet. Thus, Mr. Brinjes would lay his forefinger on the island of Madagascar, and tell us of Captain Avery and his settlement on the north of this great island, where every one of his men became like a little Sultan or King, each with a troop of slaves, and being no better than Pagans, every man with a seraglio of black wives. For aught anybody knows to the contrary, they or their sons are living on the island in splendour to this day, though their famous captain hath long since been dead. Or he would point out the island of Providence, in the Bahamas, where there was formerly a rendezvous, which continued for many years, of those who combined together to prey upon the Spanish commerce. 'And think not, boys,' said Mr. Brinjes, solemnly, 'that to sail in search of the great Plate ships can be called piracy, for pirates are the common enemies of all flags, and must be hanged when they are taken prisoners; whereas, he who takes or sinks a Spanish vessel performs a meritorious action, and one that he will remember with gratitude upon his death-bed, since they are a nation more bloodthirsty, cruel, and avaricious than any other, and Papists to boot. It is true that there were some of those who sailed from Providence, that took other ships, of whom Major Bonnet was one. Boys, I knew the Major well. He was a gentleman of good family from Barbadoes, and I cannot but think that he was unlawfully hanged, the evidence being suborned. A man of kindly and pleasing manners, who loved the bowl and a song, and was greatly loved by all his crew and those who knew him. But he is gone now, and those like unto him as well, so that the Spaniard sails the Atlantic in peace, though we have robbed him of some of his dominions. Alas! what things the Spanish Main hath witnessed! what deeds of daring, and what sufferings!'

Then he pushed this chart aside, and considered that which showed the West Coast of Africa, a part of the world which he regarded with a particular admiration, though I have always understood that it is full of fevers and diseases of a deadly kind. He knew, indeed, all the harbours, creeks, river mouths, and other places from Old Calabar to the Gambia, where such notorious desperadoes as Captain Teach, otherwise called Blackbeard, or as Captain Bartholomew Roberts, made their rendezvous, where they refitted, and whence they sailed to plunder the merchantmen of all countries. These men Mr. Brinjes knew well, and spoke of them as if they had been friends of his own, and especially the latter. I know not in what manner he acquired this knowledge of a man who was certainly a most profligate villain. He it was whose squadron of three ships was destroyed by Captain Sir Chaloner Ogle, of the 'Swallow,' in the year 1722, the pirate himself being

killed in the first broadside, and fifty-two of his men afterwards hung in chains along the coast near Cape Coast Castle.

'Boys,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'those who know not the West Coast of Africa know not what it is to live. What? Here there are magistrates and laws; there, every man does what he pleases. Here, the rich take all; there, all is divided. Here, men go to law; there, men fight it out. What do they know here of the fierce passions which burn in men's hearts under the African sun? There is summer all the year round; there are fruits which you can never taste; there are——but you would not understand. How long ago since I have seen those green shores and wooded hills, and watched the black girls lying in the sun, and took my punch with the merry blades who now are dead and gone? Strange that the world should be so full of fine places, and we should be content to live in this land of fog and cold!'

Then he pushed this chart away also, and took another, that of the great Pacific Ocean, marked, as I have said, with half a dozen routes, and especially by a broad red line, without a name or date. When Mr. Brinjes laid his finger on this route he became serious and thoughtful.

'It is forty years,' he began, 'forty years since I sailed upon these seas. Of all the crew, doth any survive save me alone? Forty years! The men were not so fierce as those on the West Coast—the air is milder—they would rest and sleep in the shade rather than fight. Forty years ago!'

The boys were silent till he should choose to tell us more.

'On board that ship I was rated as surgeon, and at first had plenty to do, sewing up wounds and healing broken heads; for, though there was a rule against fighting, it was a reckless company of rum-drinking, quarrelsome, fighting devils as ever trod the deck. We had music on board: two horns, till one fell overboard; two violins, and a Welsh harp. In the evening, when there was no fighting, there was music and dancing. 'Twas a happy barky. It was a merchantman, and we shipped our crew and fitted out at Kingston first and Providence next.'

'Where the pirates used to assemble?' said Jack.

'True. The crew were mostly rovers. What then? If you venture into the Pacific you must needs carry a fighting crew. We had plenty of arms and ammunition; and not a man on board but had been in a dozen actions by sea and land. But only a merchantman.'

Jack shook his head, as if there were doubts in his mind; then he laughed. Mr. Brinjes laid his hand on the red line where it began at Providence Island.

'Forty years ago! It was a voyage among seas where there's never a chart; among reefs and rocks not laid down, and along shores no sailors knew. The end of the voyage was disastrous, but the beginning promised well, for the men were full of heart if ever men were, and the prize we were after was worth taking.'

'Prize?' said Jack, 'for a merchantman?'

'Merchantman she was, this side Cape Horn. I only meant this side. When you double the Cape that is another matter. A man in those seas sails as happy under the Jolly Roger as under the Union Jack. A merchantman she was, built at Bristol, christened the "King Solomon," 400 tons; and when we sailed she carried twenty-two long nine-pounders, and two three-pounders, with a crew of 170 men, besides a dozen or so of negro slaves. Don't you forget, my lad, there's only two flags in those seas—the Spaniard and the Jolly Roger. Take your choice, therefore.' He paused, to let that choice be taken. 'We sailed through Magellan's Straits, taking six weeks over the job, what with contrary winds and storms. When we got out of that place—which, I take it, is the worst navigation in the world—we steered nearly due north for Juan Fernandez, where the Spaniards go from the South American ports to fish. Here it is on the chart.' His finger was following the red track. 'A mighty pretty place it is. This is where Woodes Rodgers set ashore one of his men and left him alone. After watering, we sailed away, still north, to the Galapagos Islands, where the pirates rendezvous.'

'They were pirates, then, after all?' Jack interrupted.

'The Spaniards call them such; whereas, if they do fly the black flag, it is only to strike more terror into the enemy and make them quicker to cry for quarter. Pirates, were we? Well, pirates or not, there was no man on board that craft but was an honest Englishman by birth. At Galapagos Islands we laid up to scrape and tallow the vessel, and to cure the scurvy, which had already broken out, with the limes and oranges and bananas which grow wild there, as well as the tobacco plant. The pigs run wild there, too; and if the wells only ran rum as well as water, one might as well be in Heaven at once; and there would be no need for the sailor to put to sea any more, nor any wisdom in leaving those islands.' He sighed, thinking of pleasant days in the Galapagos. 'But we were not cruising in these seas for pleasure, and we had our work to do. Wherefore, we made haste and got to sea again. What were we cruising for? Why, my lads, in hopes of coming across the great Spanish galleon, which goes twice every year from Manilla to Acupulco and back laden with treasure, so that every man on board, could we take that ship, would be made for life.

'When we left the Galapagos, every man's heart was light, and there was nothing on board but drinking, singing, and gambling, with a fair wind, and the ship taut and trim, and within a few days of the Spaniard's course. He sails these seas as if they were his own, with never a thought of trouble or meeting an enemy. We had fair weather for ten days, making, at a guess, a hundred and eighty knots a day on a nor'-west course; so that, after a week or so, we were in the latitude of Acapulco, and, according to my observations, two hundred miles west of that port—that is to say, almost in the track of the galleons, which sail, as is well known, in

an even course about lat. 13° N. And for why? If you set sail from Manilla—here,' he pointed out that distant island on the chart, 'through the Strait of Mindovo, and past Cape Espiritu Santo, you have got, between the Ladrones and Acapulco, which is close upon two thousand knots, nothing but blue water. If any other nation beside the Spanish held these seas, they would have been everywhere navigated long ago. But these lubbers care for nothing but to keep out of danger; wherefore they sail where there are no islands. Sometimes, by reason of contrary winds and the compass, which veers about in these waters as if the Devil had it, these ships are blown north and south. I have conversed with Spanish sailors who had been thus driven north, and they reported open seas, though the charts and maps do still lay down a continent between Asia and America.

'It is a most terrible voyage, full of dangers on account of the tempests which blow there, and because the crews have to live so long on salted provisions and bad water, whereby many grievous diseases are engendered, of which I learned something. There is, for instance, that disease which the Spaniards call the Lobillo, which doth commonly fall upon men who have been living at sea for many weeks upon this diet. I do not know the remedies, if any there be, for this affliction, whereby the body swells up like a bladder which is blown out, and the patient falls to prattling and babbling, until he dies. There is also what they call the Dutch Disease, which attacks the gums, and is, I take it, nothing but scurvy, and can only be cured by being set ashore. Then there is an intolerable itching of the whole body, caused by the saltness of the beef and of the air. For this there is no remedy but patience and limes, when these can be procured. There are insects also, which the Spaniards call Gorgojos, which are said to be bred in the biscuit, and creep into the body, under the skin, whence they are difficult to dislodge, and do itch intolerably, day and night; so that some have been known to go mad with the discomfort of it and have leaped overboard.

'When, therefore, we were in the latitude where we might expect any day to see a sail—every sail being a Spanish ship, and every Spanish ship a rich galleon—a reward was offered to him who could first spy a sail. But here we were unlucky, for a hurricane fell upon us, drove us off our course, and for four days we scudded, looking for nothing else but destruction, being too low in the waist and too high in the stern for such weather. However, by the Lord's help, the storm at length abated; but not before we were driven a long way north of our course, and in sight of the great island named California.' He covered it with his thumb. 'Nobody hath yet circumnavigated this island; but it is reported mountainous and sterile. Yet—Lord! what a place for rovers when they get the sense to make here a settlement for the annoyance of the Spaniard! Madagascar itself was not more plainly marked out by Providence for the use of rovers. I am old now,

or else would I plant a colony myself, with a fleet of half a dozen frigates and a few fast sailing-sloops, and so destroy the Spanish trade of the Pacific. No European sail, I take it, hath gone further north.'

Indeed, the coast line at this point was dotted to show that it was conjectural; it ran straight across the Pacific, in the line of latitude 35 N., to join the coast of China.

The storm then abating, we repaired damages, and set sail again, designing to shape our course southward, with the view of getting once more into the enemy's course. That night, I remember, the light of Saint Elmo showed upon the foretop, at which we greatly rejoiced, as a certain sign and promise of fair weather, and every man saluted it mannerly as they use in the Mediterranean. On the sixth day after the storm, we sighted an island not laid down on any chart; but we touched not at it. Three days later, the sea having been as smooth as the Pool of the Thames, we made land again. This time it was the island of Donna Maria Laxara, so called after a Spanish lady, who here leaped overboard and drowned herself for love. But mark the ways of Providence! If it had not been for that tempest, which drove us off our course—what happened afterwards never would have happened.'

'What did happen?'

'A strange thing. The strangest thing that ever you heard of. If you want to be rich, Jack, my lad, I will some day teach you how; and that in the easiest way you can imagine. If I live—alas!'

'What way? Tell me now.'

But Mr. Brinjes would tell no more. He continued gazing at the chart, and following an imaginary course with his forefinger, as if he loved the recollection of that voyage, even though the end of it had been disastrous. Then he pushed it from him with a sigh.

'Forty years ago, it was, boys. Forty years ago.'

It was in this way, among others, that Jack acquired the knowledge of geography and the thirst which continually grew greater for voyaging among the strange and unknown parts of the habitable world. In the end, as you shall hear, no one went farther afield or had more adventures.

CHAPTER II.

HOW JACK CAME TO DEPTFORD.

Of these two boys, one—namely, Jack Easterbrook—was not a native born of Deptford, but of Gosport. And since it is his history that has to be related, it is well that the manner of his coming, and the nature of his early life, should be first set forth.

On a certain warm summer afternoon, in the year of grace

seventeen hundred and forty-four, when I, who write this history, was but a child of seven, and Castilla six (we are now nearing three score years, and on the downward slope of life), there sat beneath the shade of a great walnut-tree, on a smooth bowling-green, two gentlemen and a lady; the former on a rustic bench of twisted and misshapen branches, or roots, and the latter in an elbow-chair. The lady, who had a small lace cap on her head and wore a laced apron, held a book in her hands; but the hands and book lay in her lap, and her eyes were closed. The two gentlemen were taking an afternoon pipe of tobacco. One of them —this was Rear-Admiral Sayer—was at this time some fifty-five years of age. He wore a blue coat with gold buttons, but it was without the famous white facings which His Majesty King George the Second afterwards commanded for the uniform of his naval officers; his right leg had been lost in action, and was replaced by a wooden leg, now stuck out straight before him, as he sat on the bench. He had also lost his left arm, and one sleeve of his coat was empty. He wore a full wig of George the First's time; his face was full, his cheeks red, and his eyebrows thick and fierce, yet his eyes were kindly. There was a scar across his forehead, which a Moorish scimitar had laid bare.

His companion wore the wig and cassock of a clergyman; he was, in fact, the Vicar of St. Paul's, Deptford. At the back of the bowling-green stood the house—of modern erection—with a pediment of stone, and pilasters, and a stone porch, very fine; on either side of the house was the garden, filled with fruit-trees and beds for vegetables. The garden was surrounded by a brick wall, older than the house, covered with lichen, stonecrop, wall-pellitory, yellow wallflowers and long grasses. The house and garden were protected by great iron gates, within which marched all day long, an old negro in the Admiral's livery, and wearing a cockade, armed with a cutlass. A small carronade stood beside the gates, for the purpose of announcing sunrise and sunset; and there was a mast, with standing gear and yards complete, at the head of which floated the Union Jack. Two children were playing with the bowls on the grass; and in a chair, so placed that the hot sunshine could fall with the greatest effect upon her face, there sat a negress, already old, a red cotton handkerchief twisted round her head, and in her lap lay some knitting. But Philadelphy, like her mistress, was sound asleep.

It was a sleepy afternoon. The drones and the bumble-bees—'dumbledores,' we called them—buzzed lazily about the flowers; the doves cooed sleepily from the dovecot; there was a hen not far off which expressed her satisfaction with the weather, and her brood, by a continual and comfortable 'took—took—took'; the great dog lay asleep at the Admiral's foot, the cat was asleep beside it; from the trees there came, now and then, the contented note of a blackbird; and the flag at the mast, which was rigged within the iron gates, hung in folds, flapping lazily in the light air. The two

children played, for the most part, in silence, or else in whispers, so as not to awaken Philadelphy. The two gentlemen smoked their tobacco in silence—it was not a day for talking; besides, they saw each other nearly every day, and therefore each knew the other's sentiments, and there was no room for discussion.

Suddenly, there were heard footsteps outside, and, just as one awakes out of a dream, so all started and became instantly wide-awake. Madame took up her book, the Admiral straightened his back, the Vicar knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and the children ran to the gates which Cudjo, the negro, threw wide open, a grin of welcome on his lips. Then there appeared a boy, dressed in a blue coat, not made for him, and too long in the sleeves, worn and shabby, dusty with travel, with brass buttons; his knitted stockings were torn, showing his bare legs; he wore a common speckled shirt like the watermen's children; on his head was a little three-cornered hat, cocked in nautical fashion. He strutted proudly across the grass, regardless of his rags, with as much importance as if he had been a full-blown Midshipman. For my own part, I have never lost, to this day, the sense of his superiority to myself and the rest of mankind. Castilla makes the same confession. Like myself, she owns that, child as she then was, she felt her inferiority to a boy so masterful. He was at this time, and always, a singularly handsome boy—tall and big for his age, his head thrown back, his brown eyes full of fire, and his hand at all times ready to become a fist. His hair was long, and lay in curls, and untied, upon his shoulders. After him walked the negro who had brought him from Gosport, and now carried on his shoulder a box containing all the boy's worldly goods. They consisted of a toy-ship, carved for him by some sailor at Gosport; a pistol which had been his father's; his mother's Bible, a Church prayer-book, and a knife. This was all the inheritance of the poor boy. As the servant bore this precious box through the gates, he knocked the corner against the rails.

'Steady,' said the boy, turning sharply round, 'steady with the kit, ye lubber!'

The First Lieutenant himself could not have admonished a man more haughtily. Then he halted, and took a leisurely observation of the scene. Presently he espied the Admiral, and, recognising in his appearance and dress something nautical—it would have been difficult to mistake the Admiral for anything but a sailor—Jack stepped across the lawn, lugged off his hat with a duck and a bend, and said, 'Come aboard, Sir. With submission and dutiful respect, Admiral.'

The Admiral laid down his pipe and leaned forward, hand on knee, his wooden leg sticking out before him.

'So,' he said, 'this looks like the son of my old friend. What is thy name, child?'

'Jack Easterbrook, Sir.'

'The son of my old shipmate?'

'The same, Sir.'

'Parson,' said the Admiral, 'forty-five years ago I was just such a little shaver as this, and so was his father. Hang me if the boy isn't a sailor already. Thy father, boy, was carried off by a sunstroke, while his ship was lying in Kingston Harbour.'

'Yes, Sir.'

'In command of His Majesty's frigate "Racehorse," forty-four.'

'The same, Sir.'

'And thy mother, poor soul! is dead and gone too.'

'Yes, Sir,' said the boy, looking for a moment as if he would cry. But it passed. The Admiral took his stick, and rose from his chair.

'Let us,' he said, gravely, 'overhaul the boy a bit. Thy father, Jack, was the best officer in His Majesty's service—the very best officer, whether for navigation or for fighting, which is the reason why they kept him back, and promoted the reptiles who crawl up the back-stairs. He was with me when I planted the Union Jack on the island of Tobago. Look me in the face, sirrah—so. A tall and proper lad. A brave and gallant lad. What shall we make of him?'

Jack's face became a lively crimson at this question. We were now all gathered round him—Castilla looking shyly, and with admiring eyes; and I, for my own part, thinking that here was the finest and bravest boy I had ever set eyes on.

'Well, now,' said the Admiral, holding the boy's chin in his hand, and looking at him steadily, 'I warrant, Parson, this boy will be all for book-learning, and we must make him a scholar, eh? Then, some day, he shall rise to be a Reverend Doctor of Divinity, a Dean, or even a Bishop in lawn sleeves. What sayest thou, Jack?' Here the Admiral took his hand from the boy's chin, shut one eye, and looked mighty cunning.

Jack shook his head dolefully, and then laughed, looking up as if he knew very well that this was a joke,

'Well, well, there are other things. We can make thee a compounder of boluses, and so thou shalt ride in a coach and wear a great wig, and call thyself physician. 'Tis a fine trade, and a fat, when fevers are abroad.'

But Jack again shook his head, and laughed. This was a really fine joke, one that can be carried on a long time.

'He will not be a physician. The boy is hard to please. Well, he can, if he likes, become a lawyer, and wear a black gown, and argue a poor fellow to the gallows. Of such they make Lord Chancellors. At sea their name is Shark.'

'No, Sir,' said Jack with decision, because every joke hath its due limits. 'No, Sir, I thank you. With submission, Sir, I cannot be a lawyer.'

'Here is a boy for you. One would think he was too good for this world. Perhaps he would like to wear His Majesty's scarlet,

and follow the drum and fife, and fight the King's enemies on land It is as great an honour to bear the King's commission by land as by sea. It is a good service, too, when wars are going: though in times of peace there is too much disbanding by half. But a lad might do worse. Think of it, Jack!'

'Oh! Sir,' said Jack, colouring again, 'I would not be a soldier.'

'Then, Jack, Jack, do thy looks belie thee? What? Would'st not surely choose to be a sneakin' snivelling quill-driver in a merchant's office?'

'No, Sir; I would rather starve! Sir,' said Jack, his eyes flashing, 'I would be a sailor, if only before the mast!'

'Why, there!' cried the Admiral, laying his hand on the boy's head. 'What else could the boy be? He is salt all through. Hark ye, my lad: do thy duty and thou shalt be a sailor, as thy father was before thee. Ay, and shalt stand in good time upon thy own quarter-deck and carry thy ship into action, as bravely as thy father, or even good old Benbow himself.'

Thus came Jack to Deptford, being then nine years of age.

Some things there are—I mean not travellers' tales of one-legged men, and such as have their heads between their shoulders, and griffins and such monsters; but things which happen among ourselves and in our midst, which are so strange that the narration of them must be supported by whatever character of truth, honesty, and soberness of mind may be possessed by the narrator, and those who pretend to have been eye-witnesses. As regards the history which follows it is proper to explain that there is, besides myself, only one other person who knows all the particulars. Mr. Brinjes, it is true, knew them; but he has gone away long since, and must now, I think, certainly be dead. The Admiral, before his death, was told the truth, which greatly comforted him in his last moments; and I thought it right to tell all I knew to my father, who was much moved by the strangeness of the circumstances, and quoted certain passages from Holy Writ as regards the practice of witchcraft and magic. Perhaps the man, Aaron Fletcher, knew something of the truth, but in the end he was convicted as a notorious smuggler, and sentenced to transportation to His Majesty's plantations, where he died of a calenture, being unable to endure the excessive and scorching heat of the sun, and his spirit broken by the overseer's whip. Everybody, it is true, knows how Captain Easterbrook brought his ship home and what followed. This is a matter of notoriety. There is not a man, woman, or child but can tell you the astonishing and wonderful story, the like of which has never been in the history of the British Navy. They have even made a ballad of it, very moving, which is sung in the sailors' mug-houses, not only in Deptford itself, but in Portsmouth, Woolwich, Sheerness, Chatham, and Plymouth. But to know one fact is not to know the whole history.

As for me, who design to write the truth concerning this strange

history, it is well that you who read it should know that I take myself to be a person of reputable life and of sober judgment, and one who has the fear of God in his mind, and would not willingly give circulation to lying fables. My father, the Rev. Luke Anguish, Artium Magister, formerly of St. John's College, Cambridge, of which society he was a Fellow, was the first Vicar of St. Paul's Church, Deptford; the new church, that is, in the upper part of the town, which was completed in the year 1736. By calling, I am a painter in oil colours; not, I dare say, a Sir Joshua Reynolds or a Gainsborough, yet of no mean repute as a painter of ships. It were unworthy of me to say more than that my pictures have met with approbation from persons of rank, and that I have been honoured by the highest patronage, even by members of the House of Lords, not to speak of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen. As for the contention of Castilla, that her husband is the finest painter of ships ever known, that may be the partiality of a jealous and tender spouse. I am contented to leave the judgment of my work to those who shall follow after me. I do not paint ships upon the ocean, because I have never yet gazed upon the ocean, and know not, except from pictures, how the sea should be painted, or a ship rolling upon the sea. My subjects are ships in harbour, ships lying off Deptford Creek, ships in dock, ships in building, ships in ordinary, ships ashore, ships in the Pool, ships sailing up and down the river, and especially with the sun in the west shining on the sails, and painting all the cordage as of gold, just as happened when Jack brought home his prize; also ships lying in an autumnal fog, and great barges sunk down to an inch of freeboard with their cargoes of hay. Nothing finer can be painted, to my mind, than the picture of such a barge lying on a still and misty day, with the sun overhead like a plate of copper, the brown sails half lowered, and the ropes hanging loose.

I suppose that the best place in the world for a boy who is about to become a sailor, as well as for one who loves to paint ships, must be Deptford, which seems to many so mean and despicable a town. Mean and despicable to Jack and to myself it would never be, because here our boyhood was spent, and here we played with Castilla; here we first learned to sit by the river-side and watch the craft go up and down, with those at anchor, and those in dock. At Deptford, where the water is never rough enough to capsize a tilt-boat, we are at the very gates of London, we can actually see the Pool; we are, in a word, on the Thames.

The Thames is not, I believe, the largest river in the world. The great Oroonoko is broader, and, I dare say, longer; the Nile is certainly a greater stream. Yet there is no other river which is so majestic by reason of its shipping and its trade. For hither come ships, laden with palm-oil and ivory, from the Guinea Coast; from Norway and Riga, with wood and tallow; from Holland, with stuffs and spices and provisions of all kind; from the West Indies, with rum and sugar; from the East Indies, with rice; from China,

with tea and silk; from Arabia, with coffee; from Newcastle, with coal. There is no kind of merchandise produced in the world which is not carried up the Thames to the Port of London. And there is no kind of ship or boat, built to swim in the sea, except, I suppose, the Chinese junk, the Morisco galley, or the piratical craft of the Eastern Seas, which does not lie at anchor in the Thames, somewhere between Greenwich Reach and London Bridge. East Indiamen, brigs, brigantines, schooners, yachts, sloops, galliots, tenders, colliers, hoys, barges, smacks, herring-busses, or hog-boats—all are here. And not only these, which are peaceful ships, only armed with carronades and muskets for defence against pirates, but also His Majesty's men-of-war—frigates, sloops-of-war, cutters, fireships, and every kind of vessel employed to beat off the enemies of the country, who would prey upon our commerce and destroy our merchantmen. On that very day when Jack came, was there not, lying off Deptford Creek, the 'Redoubtable,' having received her stores, provisions, and ammunition, and now waiting her captain and her crew?—and I warrant the press-gang were busy at Wapping and at Ratcliff. Beside her lay the sloop-of-war 'Venus,' and the pink 'Lively'; and, off the dock-mouth, was the 'Hector,' lying in ordinary, a broad canvas tilt or awning rigged up from stem to stern. So that those who look up and down the river from Deptford Stairs see not only the outward and visible proofs of England's trade, but also those of England's greatness. Or, again—which may be useful to the painter—one may see, not only at Deptford and at Redriff, but above the river—at Wapping, Shadwell, and Blackwall—every kind of sailor; they are mostly alike in manners and in morals, and one hopes that to sailors much is pardoned, and that from them little is expected; but they differ in their speech and in their dress. There is the phlegmatic Hollander, never without his pipe; the mild Norwegian; the fiery Spaniard, ready with his dagger; the fierce Italian equally ready with his knife; the treacherous Greek; and the Frenchman. But the last we generally see—since it is our lot to be often at war with his nation—as a prisoner, when he comes to us half-starved, ragged, and in very evil plight. Yet, give these poor French prisoners only warmth, light, and food, and they will turn out to be most light-hearted and merry blades, always cheerful and ready to talk, sing, and dance, and always making ingenious things with a knife and a piece of wood. Perhaps, if we knew this people better, and they knew us better, we should be less ready to go to war with each other.

Those who live in such a town as Deptford, and continually witness this procession of ships, cannot choose but be sensible of the greatness of the country, and must perforce talk continually with each other of foreign ports and places beyond the ocean. Also because they witness the coming and going of the King's ships (some of them pretty well battered on their return, I promise you); and because they hear, all day long, and never ending save on Sunday, the sound of hammer and of saw, the whistling

of the bo's'ns and foremen, the rolling of casks, the ringing of bells, and all the noise which accompanies the building and the fitting of ships; and smell perpetually the tar and the pitch (which some love better than the smell of roses and of violets), they cannot refrain from talking continually of actions at sea, feats of bravery, and the like. All the townspeople talk of these things, and of little else. And, besides, in these years there was the more reason for this kind of conversation, because we were always at war with France and Spain; fighting, among other things, to drive the French out of America, and so to enable the ungrateful colonies to make us, shortly afterwards, follow the lead of the French. Every day there came fresh news of actions, skirmishes, captures, wrecks, burnings. The Channel and the Bay of Biscay swarmed with French privateers as thick as wasps in an orchard. There was not a lugger on the coast of Normandy but stole out of a night to pick up some English craft; every fleet of merchantmen sailed under convoy, and every sailor looked for death or a French prison unless he would fight it out unto the end.

The people of London are strangely incurious—many there are who know nothing about the very monuments standing in their midst—and so that they can read every day the news from France and Spain, they care little about their own country. Therefore Deptford, which lies at their very gates, is as little known to them as if it were in Wales. Some, it is true, come every year on St. Luke's Day, to join the rabble at Horn Fair, landing at Rotherhithe and walking to Charlton with the procession of mad wags who carry horns on their heads to that scene of debauchery and riot; and once a year, on Trinity Monday, the Elders of the Trinity House assemble at the Great Hall behind St. Nicolas', and after business go to church, and after church dinner at the Gun Tavern on the Green. And the ships of the Royal Navy come and go at the Royal Yard almost daily. Some, again, and those fine ladies, come to Barnes Alley, where they can buy the run tea, at ten shillings a pound, of the smugglers who swarm in that evil-smelling street. Otherwise Deptford hath few visitors. I do not say that it is a beautiful city, though, as for streets, we have the Green and Church Street; and as for monuments, until late years there were the great House and gardens of Saye's Court, now lying desolate and miserable, partly inclosed in the King's Yard and partly given over to rank weeds and puddles. Here it was that the great Peter, Czar of Muscovy, once lived. There are also the two churches of St. Nicolas and St. Paul, both stately buildings, and temples fit for worship, the latter especially, which is—like its sister churches built about the same time, of Limehouse, St. George's Ratcliff, Bethnal Green, Hackney, St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, and many others—majestic with its vast round portico of stone, and its commanding terrace. Then there are the two hospitals or almshouses, both named after the Holy Trinity, for decayed mariners and their widows. To my own mind these monuments of benevolence,

which stand so thickly all round London, are fairer than the most magnificent King's palace of which we can read. Let the Great Bashaw have as many gilded palaces as he pleases for himself and his seraglio; let our palaces be those which are worthy of a free people—namely, homes and places of refuge for the aged and deserving poor, and those who are quite spent and now past work.

I suppose there are few places richer and more fortunate than Deptford and its neighbour, Greenwich, in these foundations. At the latter place, there is the great and noble Naval Hospital, now inhabited by nearly two thousand honest veterans—they will never, be sure, be turned out of this, their stately home, until England hath lost her pride in her sailors. There is Morden College for decayed merchants; there is Norfolk, also called Trinity, College, for the poor of Greenwich, and of Dersingham, in Norfolk; and there is Queen Elizabeth's Hospital for poor women. So, at Deptford, we have those two noble foundations, both named after the Holy Trinity, one behind St. Nicolas', and the other behind St. Paul's, the latter especially being a goodly structure, with a fair quadrangular court, a commodious hall, and gardens fitted for quiet meditation and for rest in the sunshine during the latest trembling years of life. I do not think that even Morden College itself, with its canal in front, and its stately alleys of trees; or Norfolk College, with its convenient stone terrace overlooking the river, and its spacious garden, is more beautiful than the Hospital of the Holy Trinity beside St. Paul's Church, Deptford, especially if one considers the stormy, anxious, and harassed lives to which it offers rest and repose. They have been lives spent on the sea; not in the pursuit of honour won at the cannon's mouth and by boarding-pike in fighting the King's enemies, but in the gathering of wealth for others to enjoy, none of their gains coming to themselves. The merchant captain brings home his cargo safe after perils many and hardships great; but the cargo is not for him. His owners, or those who have chartered the ship, receive the freight; it is bought with their money and sold for their profit. For the captain and the crew there is their bare wage, and when they can work no longer, perhaps, if they are fortunate, a room in a hospital or almshouse, with the weekly dole of loaves and shillings.

The tract of land (it is not great) lying at the back of Trinity Almshouses and the Stowage, contained by the last bend of the Creek before it runs into the river, is rented by two or three market-gardeners, and laid out by them for the production of fruit and vegetables.

As these gardens lay retired and behind the houses, no one ever came to them except the gardeners themselves, who are quiet peaceful folk. About the orchards here and the beds of asparagus, peas, endive, skirrett, and the rest of the vegetables grown for the London market, lies ever an abiding sense of peace; and this, although one cannot but hear the continual hammering of the dockyard, the firing of salutes, and the yohoing and roaring of

voices which all day long come up from the ships upon the river. I know not how we came to know these gardens, or to find them out. I used to wander in them with Castilla, when we were little children, with Philadelphy for nurse; we took Jack Easterbrook

to show him the place as soon as he came to us; we thought, I believe—as children love to think of anything—that the gardens were our own; though, of course, we were only there on sufferance, and because the gardeners knew we should neither destroy nor steal.

Perhaps the chief reason why we sought the place (because we had gardens of our own at home) was that, just beyond the last bend of the Creek, there stood, on the very edge of the steep bank—here twenty feet above low-water mark—an old summer-house, built of wood. It was octagonal in shape, having a pointed roof of shingle, with a gilded weathercock upon it. Three sides contained windows, all looking upon the river; another side consisted of a door; and a bench ran round the room, except on the side of the door. It had once been painted green, but the paint was now for the most part fallen off; the shingle roof was leaky and let in the rain; the weathercock was rusty, and stuck at due east; the planks of the wall had started; the door hardly hung upon its hinges; the glass of the windows was broken; and the whole structure was so crazy that I wonder it kept together, and did not either tumble to pieces or slip down the steep bank into the ooze of the Creek. In this summer-house the great Czar Peter, when he was learning how to build ships in Deptford Yard, would, it was said, sometimes come to sit with his princes or heyducs, on a summer evening, to drink brandy, to look at the ships, and to meditate how best to convert his enslaved Muscovites into the likeness of free and honest English sailors. We had small respect for the memory of the Czar, but as for the old summer-house it was all our own, because no one used it except ourselves. For us it was a fortress or castle, where we could play at being besieged, the ships in the river representing the enemy's fleet. Jack would sally forth and perform prodigies of valour in bringing in provisions for the garrison. Or it was our ship, in which we sustained imaginary broadsides, and encountered shipwreck, and were cast away, Jack being captain and Castilla the passenger, while I was alternately bo's'n, first lieutenant, or cook, according to the exigencies of the situation. But very soon Jack grew too big for these games, and left us to ourselves. Then we fell to more quiet sport. It was pleasant to watch the ships go up and down the river, and fine to see how the tide rushed up the Creek below us, making whirlpools and eddies, and setting upright the boats lying on their sides in the mud, and trying to tear down the bank on which stood our rickety palace We seemed to know every craft, from the great East Indiaman to the Margate hoys or the Gravesend tilt-boats, by face, so to speak, just as we knew the faces of the naval officers who walked about the town. And, thanks to Jack, we knew the history of every ship of the King's Navy which came to Deptford, and all the engagements and actions in which she had ever taken part.

Across the Creek, and as far as the woods and slopes of Greenwich, there are more gardens, so that at spring-time it was a beautiful thing to sit in the summer-house and look forth upon a great forest—it seemed nothing less to our young eyes—covered with sweet blossoms, and tender green leaves, which formed a strange and beautiful setting for the ships in the river. I have painted this picture several times, and always with a new pleasure,

so sweet and charming it is. When I began first to draw, it was in this place; but it was when Jack had ceased to play with us, because he would only have laughed at me. I drew the ships with trembling pencil, Castilla standing over me the while. The dear girl could never hold a pencil in her hand; but she could tell me if my drawings were like. Now, to draw ships that are like real ships is the most important thing of all. The time soon came when I was never without a pencil in my hand and paper to draw upon. I drew everything, just as some boys will read everything. I drew the ships and the boats, the Creek and the bridge, the sailors, the skeletons of half-built ships in the great sheds, and the girl who stood beside me.

The picture of a lad who draws while a girl stands beside him —that might stand for the picture of my life. It is a life which has been, I thank God, free from anxiety, trouble, or calamity. Once I painted such a picture (having Castilla and myself in my mind). I drew a youth of eighteen seated before a window, just such a window as that of the old summer-house. The window showed a merchantman, or part of a merchantman, slowly making her way up the river with wind and tide. Her fore-mast and main-mast were gone, and in their place two jury-masts rigged with a stay-sail; her bowsprit was gone, and her figure-head carried away and lost; her bulwarks were broken down. Yet she was safe, and her crew and cargo were safe, and the evening sun was upon her, so that she showed glorious in spite of her battered condition, and seemed like some poor human soul which, after many troubles, gets at last into the haven where she may lie at rest for ever. The boy in my picture was gazing upon his sketch as if comparing it with the original. Beside him stood a girl of the same age—be sure that she was a very beautiful girl, gentle and composed, full of holy thoughts—who looked down upon the lad. Thus it is always. The man considers his work, and the woman considers the man, loving his work because she loves the worker, yet not, like the man, carried away by admiration for the work, as knowing that all man's work is perishable and transitory, and that the breath of fame is fleeting. The picture of the girl is the true portrait of Castilla as she appeared at the age of eighteen, taken from the many drawings which I made of her at that time, her hair a light brown, falling in waves artlessly upon her shoulders, and her eyes a clear deep blue, to present which, upon the canvas, would want a Reynolds or a Raphael. Alas! if Sir Joshua had painted this picture, then, indeed, would you have caught in those eyes the light of virtue and goodness, and you would have seen about that brow a divine halo, which I have always seen there, but have not the art to represent. This it was which the ancients meant when they figured their goddesses wrapt about with a cloud.

And beside our quiet lives there ran the tumultuous course of a life whose parallel I know not anywhere.

We did not, it may be supposed, stay always in the old summer-

house. As we grew older, we roamed about the country, Jack sometimes condescending to lead the way (though he would rather have spent his whole time in the Yard among the ships). There is a pleasant country lying south and east of Deptford, You may, for instance, cross the bridge over the Creek, pass the toll-gate, and so by Limekiln Lane and London Street, a pleasant road among the orchards, you will reach the town of Greenwich, with its great hospital; and, if you please to leave this unvisited, you may turn to the right, and so up the hill by Brazenface Avenue, and into the Wilderness. Beyond the Wilderness is Blackheath, a wild and desolate spot, with never a house upon it, covered with furze-bushes. Gipsies camp here, and it is said that footpads and highwaymen lurk among the caves; but we never met any. One can come home, by way of Watersplash, along the stream, which is here no longer Deptford Creek, but the Ravensbourne—a pretty brook of pure water with deep holes under trees, and babbling shallows, running between high banks, where the primroses, in March and April, lie in thousands. The holes are full of jack, which we sometimes caught with float and hook; and here in spring we went bird-nesting, and in summer we picked the wild roses, and in autumn gathered nuts, sloes, and blackberries. Farther afield, there is Woolwich Common; or Eltham, with the ruins of King John's Palace, the walls of which still stand, and the moat may still be seen, now dry; and the King's banqueting-hall, which is used for a barn, stands stately with its Gothic windows. And if one follows up the windings of the Ravensbourne, there are presently the swelling uplands of Penge, with their hanging woods; and Norwood, Westwood Common, Sydenham Wells, and many other rural places, pleasant for those who love the haunts of singing birds and wild flowers and the babble of brooks, and remoteness from the walks of men.

But for such a boy as Jack, what are all the charms of Nature compared with the ships, and the docks, and the river? You can get orchards everywhere, but not a seaport and a dockyard. You can find rustics, and you may meditate in woods all over the country, but you cannot talk everywhere, as you can at Deptford and Greenwich, with sailors, old and young, of the merchant service and the King's Navy. The sailors are rough of speech and rude of manners; they live in mean houses; but in every house there is something strange and wonderful brought from foreign parts. The very landsmen and those who work at mechanical trades are half sailors, though they do not wear the sailors' petticoats; for they are shipwrights, boat-builders, fitters of state-cabins, carvers who decorate figure-heads and ships' sterns, or are employed in the Victualling Yard or in the carpenters' shop, or they are ships'-painters, rope-makers, or are employed to scrape clean and caulk ships' bottoms; so that the whole town makes its living by the sea. No one speaks or thinks of anything but the sea and the things which are concerned with the sea. What, for instance,

did the people of Deptford know about the conduct of the Allies and the King's land forces during the late war? Yet they knew of every naval action that was fought, and the name of every ship engaged; and there were men of Deptford, both pressed and volunteers, with every fleet and squadron. The streets were always full of sailors; the officers of the ships in commission and fitting-out were always passing in and out of the Dockyard gates; and in sunny weather the benches by the stairs, at the Upper and Lower Water Gates, were crowded with the old fellows watching the craft go up and down, and listening to the ribald jests of the watermen, and ready to talk all day long with a certain lad of bright eyes and brave face, who was never tired of listening to them.

What with the old men of Trinity and the pensioners of Greenwich, the boy heard stories enough of the sea and the ships and those who sail therein. Some of the men were so old that they could remember Admiral Benbow and his cowardly captains. There was not a single action fought in the first half of this century but was represented among the Greenwich pensioners, some of whom were in it, and had lost an arm, a leg, an eye, or anything else that can be shot away and leave the trunk still living. I can still see Jack standing before some old veteran, with a hook for a hand, his eye kindling, his cheek aflame, his fists clenched, his lips parted, because in imagination he saw the deck knee-deep in blood, the boarders leaping upon the enemy like tigers upon their prey, the ship capsized or sinking, the French flag struck, and because he heard the roaring of the great guns, the rattle of the muskets, the clash of cutlasses, and the groans of the wounded.

There are many other things at sea besides fighting, chasing, and boarding. Jack learned the daily life, for example, from these old fellows, with the duties and the discipline. He heard about foreign ports and strange lands: certainly, one would never be tired of visiting wild and unknown countries, where there may remain yet to be discovered strange races of men, with fruits and flowers as yet unseen and undreamed. But there are also, alas! storms and hurricanes, wrecks in mid-ocean, with, as the almsmen could tell us, boats laden to the gunwale with sailors who have escaped the sinking ship only to be tossed helpless on the sea with never a drop of water to drink or a mouthful of biscuit to eat. Or there are those who are cast away upon some desolate rock or unknown island, where they live on sea-birds, fish, mussels, and the like, till they die or are taken off. And some are thrown upon cold and inhospitable coasts, such as that of Labrador, where the cruel cold causes their hands and feet, their noses and ears, to fall off—there was one poor wretch in the hospital thus mutilated—and where the North American Indians (the most savage and the most ruthless race in the world) take them prisoners, and torture them before slow fires. Or there are treacherous pirates, who steal aboard, murder the crew, and pillage the ship. Or there are Moors, who make slaves of honest English sailors, and constrain them to row in their galleys bare-backed, with the master or bo's'n walking

above them on a kind of bridge, armed with a whip to scourge the bare backs of those who seem to shirk their work. Or there are French prisons, where the captives are starved on thin soup and bread for all their diet. Or there is the accursed Inquisition, into whose clutches many sailors have been known to fall, and, for their endurance in the Protestant faith, have suffered the torture of the rack, and even martyrdom at the stake. And, again, there are such perils as falling overboard, fire at sea, scurvy, yellow jack, and mutiny. And there is the evil—intolerable it would be to landsmen—of the Captain's tyranny, or, which often happens, the malice, envy, or jealousy of a First Lieutenant, with endless floggings and rope's-ending all day long, And, again, there is the danger that, after showing the greatest zeal, bravery, and activity in service, a man may be passed over by the favouritism which prevails in high quarters and the want of friends to help him. Is it not a dreadful and a shameful thing that there should be men grown old as lieutenants—nay, even as midshipmen—who have fought in a hundred battles and spent their lives upon salt water, only to feel a new mortification every voyage in serving under men young enough to be their own sons?

As for myself, the talk of these old men filled me with a kind of contempt for the seaman's lot. One cannot choose but admire the intrepidity, worthy of a stoical philosopher, with which these men face, every day, possible death; yea, and exhibit the most wonderful constancy under pain, and the strangest insensibility to danger. This, I say, commands our admiration. Yet the lot of the meanest landsman seems to me easier than that of a sailor, and I would rather be a hedger and a ditcher upon a farm than even a commissioned officer aboard the finest ship that ever floated. But we landsmen know not the strength of that longing for the sea which possesses some lads, and drags them as by chains or ropes to the nearest port (thus was Jack drawn irresistibly by the hand of fate) and so aboard—and once on the ship's books there is no other way possible—and the lad becomes for life a sailor, to spend his days rolling about on a wet and slippery deck, yet happier than if he were ashore—like unto those rovers of old, the north-country men, who could stay long in no place, but roved from port to port, landing here and there, and devouring the substance of the people, even to the southern coasts of Italy and the islands of Greece.

CHAPTER III.

HOW JACK LEARNED OF THE PENMAN.

Here were materials enough to fire the imagination and awaken the ardour of a boy about to become a sailor. But these were not all. For at home—the Admiral's house having become this orphan's home—there was talk all day long of fighting and foreign

seas and things nautical. Jack's patron or guardian had been engaged in many of the actions fought during the eleven years' war between the years 1702 and 1713. He was on board the 'Resolution,' which carried Lord Peterborough when she was intercepted by a French squadron, and was forced to run ashore in order to save her from falling into the hands of the enemy. He was in the West Indies, and was the British Captain who planted our flag on Tobago. He was on Sir George Byng's ship, the 'Royal Anne,' in Sir Cloudesley Shovel's fleet, when that hero perished off the Scilly Isles; he was a Lieutenant on board the 'Assurance' in that gallant action with the French Commander Du Guai Trouin, of the 'Achille.' In this battle he lost his arm; his leg he lost in the capture of a Moorish corsair during the reduction of Morocco, in the year 1734. After this he retired, receiving the rank of Rear-Admiral, and settled at Deptford, then about forty-two years of age. He presently discovered that it is not good for man to live alone, and therefore took a wife, who in due time bore him a child, Castilla. His daughter, who, if anybody, ought to know, says that her father possessed in an eminent degree, and daily in his lifetime exhibited most, if not all of, the virtues which should adorn the Christian who is also an officer of high rank in His Majesty's Navy. The Christian virtues, it is sure, vary according to a man's station in life. We do not expect certain things from Princes which are indispensable to those of lowly and humble lot; from an Admiral of the Fleet we do not look for meekness, patience, humility or resignation; a choleric disposition is allowed to him; the habit of applying sacred names to things profane is excused in him; and if he who has commanded a man-of-war is not to have his own way in everything, who should? As for obedience to the Commandments, it may be shown that the Admiral followed them all. Thus, for honouring his parents, he did more—he was proud of them, because they came of a good stock—and honoured himself on their account; he killed nobody save in battle, though he drubbed and belaboured his servants every day; he robbed nobody, except in an honourable way—as in taking a prize; he was envious of nothing but the Frenchman's ships; he freely forgave everybody, even those who transgressed his orders on board ship and sinned against his patience, as soon as he had soundly flogged them. To bear malice when a man had paid for his fault with three dozen was not in the Admiral's nature. And that he was of a truly good heart and a benevolent disposition was clearly shown by his treatment of Jack Easterbrook.

There were also many others, formerly of the naval service, who were contented to spend the evening of their days in this town of Deptford, which is not on the sea, yet lives by the sea. Among them was that famous traveller, George Shelvocke the younger, who accompanied his father in the circumnavigation of the globe in the year 1720, and was never tired of relating the perils, sufferings, and adventures of that voyage, and the wonders

of the South Seas: an account of the voyage hath been published for the curious. There were also Captain Mayne, who commanded the 'Worcester' in Admiral Vernon's expedition; Captain Petherick, Resident Commissioner of the Yard, who had a goodly collection of books of voyages, which he suffered Jack to borrow and to read; Mr. Peter Mostyn, formerly Cocket-writer in His Majesty's Custom House, and an ingenious, well-informed gentleman; Lieutenant Hepworth, late of General Powlett's Marines; and Mr. Underhill, retired purser of the King's Navy.

To be a purser is to hold a thankless office: it is he who is blamed for every barrel of damaged pork and for every box of weevily biscuit; he can please none; wherefore it is best for him not to try. As for the pleasures of a purser's life, I know not what they are. He must face the dangers of the deep with the rest; he must endure tempest and shipwreck; cannon-ball and grape-shot spare the purser no more than the first lieutenant, if he be on deck; and when the ship is cast away the purser drowns with the captain. Yet for all these perils he gets neither promotion nor honour. Would any man boast of having been purser, and therefore kept below in the cockpit with the surgeons and the wounded men during the most gallant action ever fought? Yet there is one consolation for the purser. He can, and does continually, by his accounts, his purchases, his bribes, and percentages, suck so much profit out of every voyage that he is presently able to leave the service and purchase a cottage, where, with a patch of garden to cultivate, perhaps a wife and children to cheer him, a few companions, a pipe of tobacco, and a glass of punch, he may forget the darkness of the orlop deck, the stink of his store-rooms, the great tallow candls in the glass lantern, by the light of which he had to keep his accounts and inspect his stores; the rolling of the ship, the thunder of the cannon in a battle, the cries of the wounded, the crash and wreck of the great ship on a rock, or the alarm of fire; yea, and even the daily purgatory caused by the tricks of the midshipmen and the gibes of the gun-room.

These gentlemen met nearly every night at the 'Sir John Falstaff,' by the Upper Water Gate, for punch and conversation; they also came often to the Admiral's house, and were, one and all, kind to the lad who was thus brought among them, and freely talked with him; so that, being of an inquiring mind, and thus running about in the dockyard, and talking with old officers, common sailors and pensioners, and with the help of the apothecary, who from the first loved the boy, I think there was no part of the world, as there was no action of recent times, with which Jack was not as well acquainted as if he had been there. At the beginning he was placed under my father, who made him begin the study of the Latin language, which he could not stomach, and would never willingly look into any books, except those which are concerned with the sea, such as Captain Park's 'Defensive Wars by Sea,' a very instructive work; 'The Practical Sea-Gunner's Companion,'

'Gordon's Geography,' and even the 'Rigging Tables,' over which he would pore contentedly for hours. He was also fond of reading voyages, and especially those volumes of Harris's and Purchas's collections—the first of the former, and the first and fourth of the latter—which are concerned with the South Seas, towards which his imagination was greatly drawn by his conversation with Mr. Brinjes and Mr. Shelvocke. That he was always fighting other boys, especially the rough river-side lads, and was seldom without some external sign of combat, such as a black eye, cut lip, and swollen nose, certainly did not lessen him in his patron's regard, because, when all is told, the most valuable quality in a sailor is the love of fighting.

So strong and courageous was he, so ready to fight, and so uncommonly backward in owning himself beaten, that none of his age and stature dared to contend with him—save at stone-throwing and at a distance—except one, of whom mention is here made; not because a boy's fights are matters of serious history, but because the fighting between these two, thus begun, was continued after both became men, and with consequences most important. This boy was the son of a boat-builder in the town; his name was Aaron Fletcher. In strength, age, and stature nearly the same as Jack; in bravery and spirit, equal to him. Yet, whenever they fought—which was often—Aaron was defeated, because he lacked the dexterity and quickness of eye which beat down mere strength, and render courage useless. Yet Aaron would not own to inferiority; and, whenever the boys met, they began to snarl at each other like a pair of terriers, and the first stone was thrown, the first taunt uttered, the first blow delivered, and then, at it again, like French and English.

Further, that he neglected his Latin, went to sleep in church, put powder in the negroes' tobacco, tied ropes across the road to throw down belated wayfarers, and played a thousand pranks daily may be admitted. These things only cost him a flogging when he was found out, and endeared him more and more to his guardian.

When Jack was eleven years of age, the Admiral, regardless of my father's protestations of the perils encountered by those who are ignorant of the classics, placed him wholly in the charge of Mr. Westmoreland, who, although only a penman by trade, had acquired so great a proficiency in arithmetic, the rudiments of navigation. the taking of observations, and the working of logarithms, that he had no equal in the town, and was perfectly able to instruct a young gentleman before he went on board. In all these branches the boy showed and displayed an uncommon zeal and quickness. But, I verily believe, if he had thought that the study of Hebrew or Chaldean would have helped him forward in his profession, he would have entreated my father to teach him.

Mr. Westmoreland, his master, was a mild and gentle creature, who loved nothing but the study of mathematics and the art of fine writing, so that, though he wrote letters for any who came to

him, and copied deeds for the attorney, and wrote out his sermon large and fair for the Vicar of St. Paul's, he always turned from these labours with joy to his books and his calculations. He was, in appearance, short and bent, with rounded shoulders, and with a hump (which made the boys call him My Lord). His voice was high and squeaky; he wore round horn spectacles; when these were off you perceived that his eyes were soft and affectionate; his forehead was high and square, and he wore a plain scratch wig. He was a patient teacher, and bore an excellent character for uprightness and piety, though he was despised by the rougher sort because, although he was now no more than forty, or thereabouts, he could not fight, or even defend himself.

He lived next door to the apothecary, in that row of houses on the north side of the Trinity Almshouses where reside the better sort of tradesmen, such as the sexton of St. Nicolas; Mr. Skipworth, the principal barber and wigmaker, who shaved all the gentry in the place, and kept four assistants continually employed in dressing and flouring their wigs for them; the master measurer's assistant, and the master shipwright's assistant. But these honest folk did not call Mr. Brinjes their equal. He, for his part, took his pipe nightly at the 'Sir John Falstaff' with the gentlemen, while they used the 'Plume of Feathers.'

Under Mr. Westmoreland's instruction, Jack learned all that the ingenious penman had to teach him, except his fine handwriting and the beautiful flourishes with which a dexterous pen can adorn a page; and by the time he was twelve years of age he understood the use of the compass, the sextant, the ship's charts, all the various parts of a ship and her rigging, and a great deal of geography and naval history.

As for the parts of a ship, he learned them chiefly in the Yard, where he would wander among the sheds and watch the building of the ships, the repair of those in the dry dock, and the fitting out of those in the wet dock, the bending of the great beams by steam, which is made to play upon them until they become soft, the making of rope, the cutting and shaping of pulleys and blocks, the forging of anchors, and every part of the business belonging to the construction of ships. Then, again, he learned the names and purposes of all the ropes, running and standing gear, sails, flags, signals, sailing rules, and rules for action, and his natural curiosity made him inquire into, and acquaint himself with, the way in which everything is made, and may be repaired or replaced. He learned all these things from natural eagerness and interest in everything concerning a ship; but in the end this knowledge stood him in good stead, because there is no detail in the conduct and construction of a ship which ought to be below the notice of the officers, a fact which many commanders forget, leaving the navigation of the ship to the master, her seaworthiness to the carpenter, and the health of the crew to the purser. Surely if, as hath been advanced by some, every boy is born with a clear vocation for some trade or

profession, just as Paul, though an Apostle, was also a tent-maker, and Luke, at first a physician, and Peter a fisherman (afterwards of men); then, most certainly, Jack, by right divine and special calling of Providence, was a sailor.

While he sat every morning at work with his mild instructor, Mr. Westmoreland, there was always present a little girl, three years younger than himself, a child with black hair, rosy checks, and big black eyes. When it was winter weather this child sat in a little chair beside the fire; when it was warm and sunny, she sat in the open doorway. She was a grave child, who seldom played with other children; she had no dolls or toys; she took great pleasure in household things, and from a very early age was her father's housekeeper; when she grew older she became his ruler as well, ordering things as seemed to her best. And though her father was so fond of books and learning, this girl would never so much as learn to read. One does not, to be sure, expect girls in her station to acquire the arts of reading and writing, if only because they have no books, and never have occasion to write. These arts would be as useless to them as the knowledge of riding or dancing the minuet. But it was strange that Bess should be so different in disposition as well as in appearance to her father; and stranger still, that so rickety a man should be the father of so strong and stout a girl. As for her mother, no one knew whither she had gone, or what had become of her; it was said by those who remembered her that she was as comely as her daughter, but a termagant and a shrew in temper, who led her mild husband a terrible life, even sometimes taking the broomstick to him, and beating him over the head with it, poor man!—or laying about her with the frying-pan, as ungoverned women use towards those husbands who, like Mr. Westmoreland, are afraid, or too weak of arm, to keep them in submission by the same methods. She left her husband (he bore the loss with Christian submission) a year or two after marriage, and was reported to have been afterwards seen at Ranelagh, among the ladies and gentlemen there, dressed in a hoop, all in silk and satin, patches, and paint, and fan in hand—very fine, and carrying a domino, just for all the world as if a penman's wife could become a gentlewoman.

From the very first, a singular friendship existed between Jack and this girl. He brought her apples, comfits, and cakes, which Philadelphy, Castilla's black nurse, made for him; he played with her, and made her laugh; then he teased her, and made her cry; then he coaxed her into good temper again. She was a child who fell into the most violent storms of passion, which none but Jack could subdue; he took a pleasure both in exciting her wrath and appeasing it. On the other hand, he never tried to enrage or to tease Castilla—perhaps because she was possessed of such extraordinary calmness and sweetness that it was impossible to provoke her, and it was waste of time, even for a boy who loves teasing, to practise upon one who regards it not. Bess, for her part, was one

of those who would rather be teased into anger than neglected. It was pretty to see how she would sit when he was at his lessons with her father, watching him silently, and how she would follow him, when he suffered her, submissive and obedient; though there was nobody else in the world, not even her father, to whom this wilful girl would submit. There are some men to whom women willingly and joyfully submit themselves, and become their slaves with a kind of pride; but there are others to whom no woman will submit. Of the latter kind was Mr. Westmoreland, Bess's father, who was born to be ruled by his wife. Of the former, Jack was one; when he was only a boy, the sailors' wives and daughters in the street would call after him for a pretty lad, and bid him come and be kissed; and when he was a man grown, the maids would look at him as he passed along the street, and would follow him with longing eyes. But if a woman becomes the slave of a man, she will have him to be her slave in return; for where there is great love there is also great jealousy; and also where there is great love there is also the possibility of great wrath and great revenge—as you will presently discover.

In one word, long before he went on board as a volunteer, young Jack Easterbrook was eager to feel the deck rolling under his feet, and to hear the first shot of his first action; he was also well advanced in all the knowledge of ropes and rigging that the gunner has to teach the youngsters aboard. It is further to be noted that at this early age, and before he went to sea, the boy had already acquired the settled conviction that all things which the round world contains, and the kindly earth produces, belong especially to the sailor by right divine, and were intended by Providence for his solace when ashore; that to provide for him, and for his comfort, landsmen toil perpetually; that while he is fighting our battles for us, we are gratefully devising, contriving, making, compounding, and inventing all kinds of things for his enjoyment when he comes back to us; such, for instance, as strong wine and old rum, music and fiddles, songs and dances, tobacco and snug taverns; he is to have the best of all; for him the most beautiful women reserve their favours, and desire to win his affections before those of any landsman whatever. Young and old, man, woman, boy, and girl, we all loved the boy. There was not in Deptford or in Greenwich a more gallant lad, one more brave and resolute, nor one more handsome. For all his fortune he had but his resolution and his sword. And he went forth to conquer the world with so brave a heart and a carriage so sprightly that the men laughed only for the pleasure of looking upon him, and the women cried. I am sure that the true soldier of fortune hath always made the women cry.

At the age of eleven, also, the Admiral, by permission of the Captain, was enabled to place the name of the boy on the books of the 'Lenox' as a volunteer, although he did not send him yet to sea, considerately holding that this age is too tender for the

rough usage of boys aboard ship, though many boys are sent away so early. But, by entering him on the ship's company he secured that his rating as midshipman should begin at thirteen and his commission as lieutenant be obtained at nineteen. So that, although the boy was still working with Mr. Westmoreland, he was supposed to be cruising with Captain Holmes aboard the 'Lenox.'

CHAPTER IV.

HOW JACK FIRST WENT TO SEA.

In the autumn of the year 1747—the last but one of the war then raging—the Admiral judged that the time was now arrived when the boy should join his ship. 'For,' he said, 'the lad is already nearly thirteen, and tall for his age; and he knows more than most youngsters have learned after twelve months at sea. He grows masterful, too, and will be all the better for the rope's-end which the gunner hath in store for him, and for the mast-head, where he will spend many pleasant hours. And as for the Captain—Dick Holmes is not one who will skulk, or suffer his crew to skulk. What better can happen for a boy than to sail with a fighting Captain?'

''Tis a brave lad, Admiral,' said my father—'twas at the club or nightly assemblage at the 'Sir John Falstaff.' 'By such stuff as this let us pray that England's fleets will always be manned. They have never heard of Selden's "Mare clausum," and know not his argument, which is, to my mind, conclusive. Nevertheless, they go forth to support those arguments by a kind of blind instinct, which I take to be in itself a clear proof of his sound reasoning.'

'I have never met any Mary Clausum,' said the Admiral, 'to my knowledge. Polly Collins, there was in my time, at Point—a black-eyed jade. But Jack is, as yet, full young to think of any Polly of them all.'

'Nay, 'tis the title of a learned work. I meant only that if England is to be Queen of the seas, which France and Spain still dispute with us, and are likely to dispute for a long while, it is well that we have such boys, and plenty of them. There can never be too many Britons born in the world.'

'True, Doctor; especially if we go on expending them in this fashion.'

'We send forth this tender child, Sir,' continued the Vicar of St. Paul's, 'to a hard and rough life. He may be wrecked; he may be killed in action; he may lose his limbs; there are a thousand perils in his way. Yet we do not pity him, because, if his life must needs be short, it will be honourable. And he is in the hands of Providence.'

'That is true, Doctor. Though as to danger, hang me if I think he is worse off aboard ship than he would be ashore, what with

sharks and lawyers, rogues and murderers, robbers and cheats, to say nothing of the women. And on board ship they cannot get at a man. And as for hardships—why, every youngster looks forward to being an Admiral at least, and to lead his squadron into a victorious engagement—and sometimes he does it, too.'

'As for me, Admiral,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'I shall bid good-bye to the lad with a vast deal of pleasure. He will go never a day too soon. Keep a lad too long and he gets stale. As for dangers, I think you are right. But there are dangers afloat which the landsman does not know, and more dangers than the enemy's shot or a gale of wind. A boy may have a bully for first lieutenant, or a tyrant for captain.' Here his only eye flashed fire, from which one may conjecture that he had himself experienced this accident, and still cherished the memory; 'or a skinflint and a cheese-scraper for a purser.'

'Nay, nay,' said Mr. Underhill, 'the purser is for ever in fault.'

'Or a lickspittle for a Master; there are rogues and scoundrels afloat as well as ashore. Mark you, if it is bad for the midshipmen, 'tis worse for the crew; in such ships are floggings daily, and mutinous words whispered 'tween deck, with rope's-ending and continual flogging, no matter how smart a man may be; and yet they wonder why men rise sometimes and murder their officers and carry off the ship under the black flag. Pirates? Why, even if they knew that the gibbet was already built whereon they were to hang in chains till they dropped to pieces, do you think they would not have their revenge, and then a free and a merry life, if only for a short year or two before they die?' and with that Mr. Brinjes looked about him so fiercely that for a while no one spoke.

'These words are better said ashore than afloat,' said the Admiral presently. 'I've tied up a man and given him six dozen—ay, or hanged him for mutiny, for less than that, Mr. Brinjes.'

'Very like, very like,' returned Mr. Brinjes, recovering his good temper. 'I will remember it, Admiral, if ever I ship with you. As for the boy now—this boy of ours—he will do well, and will turn out a credit to us all, Admiral. I have never known a more resolute lad or one better fitted for the work before him. I have taught him, for my own part, how the land lays as regards the wickedness of men, both ashore and afloat. He is prepared for a good deal; and so far, I think, never was a lad sent abroad better prepared. He knows as much, Doctor, not to speak boastfully, as a Roman Catholic confessor. Now, when a boy is fully acquainted with devilry, he need fear no devils, male or female.'

The ship on whose books he was borne—namely, the 'Lenox,' Captain Richard Holmes—was now refitting at Sheerness, being under orders to join the West Indian squadron of seven ships under Rear-Admiral Knowles, at Port Royal, Jamaica. A beautiful ship she was, nearly new, a third-rate, of seventy guns, though at this time she carried no more than fifty-six, and a complement of six

hundred men. You shall hear, presently, with what singular good fortune the boy began his course. This good fortune continued with him unbroken until the event which I have to relate, so that, in thinking of Jack, I am reminded of that Lydian King who was told by the philosopher to count no man happy until the end. Always, in every ship, he gained the good opinion of the superior officers; always the actions in which he fought were victorious; promotion and distinction, prize-money, and escape from shot and cutlass wound—what more could a sailor desire? To be sure, there was one voyage which proved disastrous. Even here he escaped drowning when so many perished. Besides, this was in time of peace.

It is generally believed that boys are shipped off to sea because they are too loutish and stupid for the arts by which landsmen rise. But we do not hear that such lads rise to distinction by reason of loutishness. This is not the way with those who live in a dockyard town. There the flower of the youth flock to the service, and there is no lack of volunteers, even for ordinary seamen, in time of war. There are skulkers, it is true; but they are more common at Wapping than at Deptford. As for officers, happy that boy who wears the King's uniform; envied is he among his companions. You may judge he wants but little admonition to encourage him in zeal.

'Boy,' said the Admiral, catechising the lad before he joined his ship, 'what is thy first duty?'

'Respect for superiors, Sir,' said Jack.

'Right; and the next? No argument on board. And when fighting begins don't gape about the ship to duck for any cannon-shot that flies over head; but stand steady at quarters, eyes open, and hands ready. What? Many a chance comes of showing your mettle when least expected, as when a boarding attack is repelled, or the word is given to leap on board and at 'em. Be ever ready, yet not too forward, lest it seem a reflection upon thy betters. Wait till thy time comes; when it does come—but, by the Lord, Jack, I have no fear of thee!'

Other directions the Admiral gave the boy, which may be here omitted, the more particularly as they referred to the conduct which a boy should observe in port and on shore; and the Admiral's warnings were plain and clear, and such as may be read in the Book of Proverbs. My father also admonished the boy, particularly on the wickedness of profane swearing. Of this he was likely to hear only too much, and, indeed, his captain was reported to be one who enforced his orders with a great deal of hard swearing. My father also addressed a few words to this young sailor on the evils of immoderate drinking, too common on land, though restricted by wholesome discipline at sea. And he instructed the boy how he should govern himself, keep his temper in control, guard his tongue, fight his shipmates no more than was necessary for self-respect and honour; and how, when the time should come when he himself

was to be put in authority, he should be merciful in punishment, and err on the side of leniency, remembering that though a man's back must suffer for his sins, he should not be torn to pieces and cruelly lacerated—as is the practice on board some ships—save for the most heinous offences against order, morality, and discipline. 'The ancient Romans,' added my father, 'could, if they chose, flog a slave to death. Yet it was counted infamous to use this power. The captain of a King's ship has this power also, seeing that he may, if he so please, order a man as many as five hundred lashes—a truly dreadful punishment, under which the strongest man may succumb. Reserve this power when thou hast it, Jack. Three dozen, or even one, in the case of young sailors, may be as efficacious as six dozen: a wholesome discipline is better served by moderation than by cruelty.'

I know not how far my father's admonitions produced good fruit. In after time Jack was ready enough to rap out a profane word; on the other hand, he was beloved by the men on account of his punishments, which were as certain after offence as the stroke of the ship's bell, but never cruel. It were to be wished some captains on land as well as at sea would remember that three dozen may be sometimes as good as six dozen! It was but yesterday that a poor fellow, a Grenadier, under sentence to be shot for desertion, had his punishment commuted, as they call it, to five hundred lashes. He appealed, and the previous sentence was confirmed; therefore he went boldly to his death, thinking it better to be shot than to be tortured by the lash until he died.

Then we all engaged upon Jack's sea-chest; and I suppose no bride ever contemplated her new furniture and house-linen with more pride and satisfaction than Jack bestowed upon his chest. It was strong and stoutly made, with a till and two trays. It contained his uniform coat, his watch coat, a glazed hat for night watch in bad weather, two hats each with a gold loop and a cockade, his stockings, shirts (they were of the finest kind, fit for a young gentleman, with lace ruffles), his boots, handkerchief, crimson sash, and his hanger. Besides these things there were his log-books, ruled and prepared for him by Mr. Westmoreland; pens cut for him by the same hand; a quadrant, with a day and a night glass; the 'Elements of Navigation,' the 'Sailor's Vade-Mecum,' the 'Sea Gunner's Companion,' and a book on the 'Method of Computing Observations,' so that he was amply provided with his favourite reading. To these were added, by my father, a copy of the Holy Bible, with the Book of Common Prayer. These things, with a pocket compass and a tin pannikin or two, a book of songs, and a few other trifles, made up Jack's outfit.

When all was ready and the time of departure was come, the Admiral put into his hand a purse full of guineas, and told him that until such time as he should be rated midshipman, an allowance of thirty guineas a year should be given to him. This is a liberal addition to a boy's pay, and I doubt whether any other youngster

on board the 'Lenox' possessed so splendid an addition to his two pounds a month.

On the morning of his departure our young hero appeared dressed for the first time in his blue uniform coat, with the gold loop in his hat, and his hanger at his side, trying to look as if he had worn it for years, and was unconcerned about his personal appearance. He was going down to Sheerness in a tilt-boat, accompanied by two of the Admiral's negroes, to get his sea-chest aboard, and provided with a letter for the captain. We all went down to the Stairs with him—the Admiral, my father, Castilla and myself, with Philadelphy. We found, also waiting on the Stairs, Mr. Westmoreland and Bess, Mr. Brinjes, and the boy Aaron Fletcher.

'Farewell, Master Jack,' said Mr. Westmoreland, in his cracked and squeaky voice, 'farewell; I shall never have so good a pupil again. Forget not the rules for the right placing of the decimal point, and do not neglect practice in the Tables of Logarithms.'

'Good-bye,' said Jack, shaking his hand. 'I will remember. Good-bye, Bess.' He laid his arm round the girl's neck—she was now ten years of age, and as tall as Castilla, though a year younger—and kissed her on both cheeks. 'Good-bye, my girl—give me another.' He kissed her again. Bess said nothing; but the tears rolled down her cheeks, and her father drew her away to make room for his betters.

Then Jack saw Aaron, and he laughed aloud.

'Ho! ho! Aaron Fletcher. There isn't time for a fight this morning, Aaron,' he said; 'give us your hand.'

Aaron took the proffered hand, but doubtfully.

'I thought I'd come to see the start, Master Jack,' he said; 'and I wanted to say——'

'Well?' asked Jack; for the lad hesitated.

'To say when you come back—if it's next year or next ten years—I'll fight you again, for all your gold loop.'

'So you shall, Aaron—so you shall,' said Jack, with another laugh. 'That's a bargain.'

And so, with a kiss to Castilla, and a shake of the hand to me, and after receiving the blessing of the Admiral, who needed not to spoil its solemnity by a profane oath, he leaped into the boat, took the strings, and ordered the men to give way. But he looked back once, and waved his hand, crying out, 'Good-bye, Bess.' So his last thought was of the Penman's girl.

'When he comes home, Aaron,' said Bess, wiping away her tears, 'Jack shall beat you into a jelly.'

'I'll break every bone in his body for him,' said Aaron. 'Oh! I wish he would come back to-morrow. And you may be there to see, if you like.'

'I shall tell him the first thing when he comes back. What? You dare ask him to fight? You? I wonder, for my part, that a Midshipman should dirty his fist upon your face.'

The Admiral looked after the receding boat, his red face full of affection and emotion. Beside him stood my father, in wig and cassock, as becomes a Doctor of Divinity. Mr. Brinjes, in his brown morning coat and scratch wig, looked a strange companion to them. But the watermen on the Stairs stood aside even more respectfully for him than for the Admiral. He might, indeed, knock them over the head with his gold-headed stick, but he could not, like Mr. Brinjes, scatter rheumatic pains and toothache among them.

And here a singular thing happened. There is no man more free from superstitious terrors, I think, than myself. Yet I cannot but remember that while Castilla cried, and I myself should have liked nothing better than to cry, but for the unmanliness of the thing, the old witch-woman—she was nothing less—this Mandingo prophetess, whose powers were as real as those believed to belong to Mr. Brinjes—began to shiver and to shake and her teeth to chatter. To be sure, it was a morning in December, but mild for the time of year, and the sun shining. No doubt some cold breath struck her face and made her shiver. But, to Philadelphy, everything unexpected was full of prophetic warning, could she read it aright.

'What does it mean?' she murmured. 'What in the world can it mean? I dun know what this shiver means: Mas'r Jack come home again, I think, and play mischief with some of us. There's trouble sure, for somebody—trouble and crying. Dun you be afraid, Miss Castil, ole Philadelphy know plenty words to keep off the Devil.'

She meant that she had plenty of incantations or charms by which to avert and ward off evil. I am sure there was never a witch-woman or Obeah man on the African coast or in Jamaica had more spells and secrets of magic and unholy craft than this old negress.

CHAPTER V.

MIDSHIPMAN JACK.

THUS was Jack fairly launched and started upon his profession. As regards a boy's first days at sea, they are reported by all to be the most miserable in his whole life. For the Quarters of the youngsters, volunteers and midshipmen, on a ship of the line, are beneath the lower gun-deck on what they call the cock-pit or the orlop. This is a dark and gloomy place, below the level of the water; no daylight can ever come to it, and there can be little access of pure air. Here the purser has his stores, the surgeon keeps his drugs, the bo's'n and carpenter their ropes and spare gear, so that the place smells continually of tallow, beef, pork, tar, and bilge-water. It swarms with rats and cockroaches; in time of battle the wounded are brought here, near the after hatchway, as

to the safest part of the vessel. Here the youngsters hang their hammocks and stow their chests. As for their mess, it is with the surgeon's mate, the master's mate, the purser's mate, and the captain's clerk. To boys brought up delicately, the food is coarse; new-comers have to run the gauntlet of rough jokes, and the horse-play which among these lads passes for wit: it is that kind of wit to which the only answer is by force of fist. The young sea-lions' play is always like a fight, and generally ends in one. Therefore, if a boy on board ship love not fighting, he had better tie a kedge-anchor round his neck and drop overboard. But if, like Jack, he loves and is always ready for a fight, and will engage with the first who offers, however big and strong he may be, then the society of the midshipmen's mess may become delightful to that boy; for the wish of his heart will be gratified. I believe this was Jack's case; he hath told me how for a week or two he fought every day, and how, at the termination of each encounter, he found reason to thank Aaron Fletcher for his toughness and obstinacy, which had taught him useful lessons. Further, there are tricks to be endured, such as the stealing of a boy's breeches when he is dressing, so that he is late on deck, and is consequently mast-headed: or the greasing of his head with tallow while he is asleep; with many other nauseous jokes, all of which have to be borne with good humour until an opportunity occurs of revenge; or the little tyranny of one who, because he is a head taller, thinks he can do as he pleases; one such did Jack fight every day—getting, to be sure, the worst of it—until the big fellow had no more stomach for the fight, and left his adversary in peace. As for the gloom of his quarters, and their narrowness and discomfort—why, Jack had seen them often enough, and knew what to expect, and cared not two pins for them. As for sea-sickness, Jack never felt it. The rough sea fare he liked; and as for the daily duty and the sharp discipline, these were part of the profession, and designed for the safety and government of some hundreds of lives and the accomplishment of the ship's purpose. If a sailor would be happy, he must, I take it, acquire, as soon as possible, the feeling of association. Everything has to be shared; if he take on board with him and nourish the desire, common to all landsmen, of getting as much comfort for himself as he can seize, he will never be easy. Comfort, I suppose, and ease of body, are served out, on board a man-o'-war, in rations and pannikins—like the rum.

Jack's good luck began, as I have mentioned, with his first voyage—that is to say, whatever good fortune can come to one so young fell to him, as you shall see.

The 'Lenox' sailed on Dec. 5, 1747, and, meeting with none of the enemy on her voyage, joined Admiral Knowles at Port Royal, in Jamaica, on Feb. 8—a short passage—the ship being a fast sailer and ably handled.

As this war took place when I was a child, coming happily to an end when I was but twelve years of age, I know little about it

save that my early recollections are all of activity in the Yard, the going and coming of ships, the building and launching of ships, the hurry and the business of war. There were some very fine engagements at sea, I believe, of which I know only one or two—those, namely, in which Jack was engaged; and there were some memorable actions fought on land, of which that of Dettingen was one. There are in every century so many wars; there are in every war so many actions, every one of which in the eyes of those who have fought on the victorious side, and especially in the eyes of the Admiral or General, is so memorable that it will remain for ever in the history of the world as a feat of arms never to be forgotten. This vanity is like that of the poet, who thinks that for an ode to 'Fame,' or to 'Victory,' published in the 'European' or the 'Lady's Magazine,' he is covered with glory and crowned with an everlasting wreath of bays. One immortal victory is succeeded by another; one General causes his predecessor to be forgotten; one poem is followed by another; then both are suffered to repose between the leather binding of the volumes which contain them. It is only the work of the painter which lives on the walls for all men to admire in all ages to come.

I say, then, that whatever imperishable glory surrounds the names of those who conducted for the Allies this war, I know of none except that which belongs to one squadron in the last year of the war. An account of it may be read in Mr. John Hill's 'History of the British Navy,' itself compiled from the papers of the late Honourable Captain George Berkeley, R.N., which stops short at this chapter, the book having been published at the beginning of the next war. What I know of it is taken from the description of these affairs given me by Jack himself.

The 'Lenox,' then, arrived at Port Royal on Feb. 8, 1748. The captain was heartily welcomed by Admiral Knowles, who was on the point of sailing on an expedition from which the best was hoped. By the greatest exertions, the ship was provisioned in readiness to join, and the squadron, Governor Trelawny accompanying the Admiral, left Port Royal on the 13th with design to attack Santiago, or Saint Jago, the most important town and port of Cuba, next to Havana. The squadron was strengthened by a detachment of 240 men of the Governor's regiment. The fleet unhappily met with contrary winds, which were so long and persistent that the Admiral resolved upon changing the plan of the expedition. It was, therefore, decided to make an attack upon Port Louis, on the south side of Hispaniola. Thither, therefore, the wind being favourable, they sailed, and arrived in good order. On the 8th of March, the ships being then almost within pistol-shot of the walls, the attack was commenced; the cannonade lasted three hours, at the end of which time the enemy's guns were silenced, and the Governor proposed to capitulate. He sent an officer off with propositions, which the Admiral refused, and sent back his own, giving an hour for consideration. Before the end of that

time they were accepted, and the place was taken. 'I believed,' said Jack, telling me of this, his first action, 'that every cannon-shot that struck the ship or flew through the rigging was going to knock my head off, not thinking that, by the time I heard the noise of it, the danger was over. Yet I was resolved to stand at my quarters, and do my duty as well as I could; but for the life of me I could not help ducking my head, till the gunner spied me and found time to fetch me a clout on the head, saying, "You fool, that cannon-ball was half a mile beyond the ship before you ducked. Hold up your head, and remember that when it is knocked off you will have no time to duck out of its way." So, with that I plucked up, and was comforted to see the men at the guns, none of them killed, and none of them ducking. So I was highly ashamed of myself till they told me afterwards that, at the first engagement, most everybody ducks. As for the Captain, he was on the quarter-deck, and scorned to show the least fear; and the men at their quarters only laughed, even when a shot struck the ship and fragments of the timbers went flying about. But it was fine to see how, one by one, we silenced the guns. Only I should like to see fighting at close quarters. This pounding with the big guns at long range is not to my taste.'

There was some work for the boats as well; for the enemy set fire to one of their ships, and endeavoured to send her alongside the Admiral's ship; but boats were sent off, which towed her clear, and took possession of two more designed for the same purpose, though the enemy's musketry fired smartly on them all the time. Our loss in the whole action was only ten men killed, among whom were Captain Renton, of the 'Stafford,' and Captain Cust, a volunteer, with sixty wounded. The loss of the enemy was a hundred and twenty-eight killed. The fort contained seventy-eight cannon and a vast quantity of ammunition and stores, the whole of which was taken possession of and the fort blown up.

I dare say it was a small business, but it seemed a great one to the boy, who thus took part in an action for the first time.

This affair concluded, the Admiral proceeded to put into execution his design upon Saint Jago.

The attack, however, failed, because they found a chain across with two large ships and two small ones filled with combustibles and ready to be set on fire at the first attempt to break the chain. This was mortifying, and added nothing to the Admiral's reputation. But six months later, it was Jack's good fortune to take part in a spirited action with the Spanish squadron between Havana and Tortugas. It was in October, and I believe after the peace had been signed; but this they knew not. The Spanish fleet consisted of the same number of ships as our own, but larger, and with double the number of men. There was a court-martial afterwards, and the Admiral was reprimanded for not shifting his flag when his own ship was disabled. Therefore the action is not one of those in which the country can take the most pride. But this had

nothing to do with a young midshipman, and no one ever denied that the 'Lenox,' for her part, was admirably fought and handled, seeing that when the 'Cornwall,' the Admiral's ship, was disabled, the 'Lenox' had to sustain the fire of the whole of the squadron until the arrival of the 'Canterbury' and the 'Warwick.' At sundown the Spaniards began to retreat, but not before their great ship the 'Conquestador' was taken. Admiral Knowles has been further reproached with not prosecuting the pursuit with greater vigour. However that may be, he fell in, two days afterwards, with the Spanish Admiral's ship, the 'Africa,' and blew her up. Whatever might have been our success it cannot, therefore, be denied that we took two out of seven ships, and compelled the rest to run away. As for Jack, he had learned now to receive the enemy's broadsides without ducking; 'but what amazed me most,' he told us, 'was that there was no shouting or crying among the men. They were all as cool as if they were firing a salute at Spithead. When a man was wounded and fell, he was carried below, so there was not much of the groaning and shrieking that landsmen talk about. Why, those fellows of ours will have a leg sawn off and never groan. Whereas, if a man is killed, you can't expect him to groan afterwards. To be sure, I've never seen a fight with a boarding party. And I say, Luke, the first time you see a man killed, when he falls down in a heap on the deck, and his face turns quite white, and his arms and legs lying out anyway, as if he didn't care what was going to happen—it makes you feel sick and dizzy. But the men only laugh, because every one takes his turn; and you can't escape the bullet that is bound to kill you. If it wasn't for knowing that, nobody would be able to feel happy, and work with a will, while the shots are flying about. Luke, there's another thing'—here his voice dropped to a whisper—'there's a thing I never knew before, nor suspected. There's cowardly captains, even in the King's Navy—captains who won't crowd on the canvas in pursuit, and drop out of action, pretending to be disabled. They never told me that—not even Mr. Brinjes told me. And half-hearted captains. Why, if all they say is true, we should have been inside Saint Jago, instead of sheering off after a broadside or two. But there's more brave captains than the other sort; and so you'll see when next we have a brush.'

For the 'Lenox,' with Admiral Knowles's squadron, had now returned and the ship was paid off, and Jack had made his way home again, when you may be sure we killed the fatted calf and gave him welcome. He was gone, on that voyage, for the best part of two years, and was now fifteen years of age, and looked eighteen, being so big and strong. The sun and the wind had painted his cheeks a lively colour, his hands were brown, his speech was rough, and his bearing was manly. Wonderful it was to see the confidence and the manliness of one so young, to say nothing of the pride he took in the exploits of his ship. These, we presently discovered, lost nothing in the telling. He brought home

a most beautiful necklace of red coral which had been found in the fort of Port Louis, belonging, no doubt, to one of the mulatto or half-caste women, who were both the slaves and the mistresses of the Spaniards in those parts. He showed it to me one day, and I expected he would give it to Castilla. Fortunately, I told her nothing about it, and presently I saw it round the neck of Bess Westmoreland. It is so common at Deptford to see girls of her class decorated with gold chains, coral necklaces, jewelled brooches, and all kinds of finery (for a few days only, because they speedily send the things to London to be sold), that no one asked who had given the child an ornament so unsuitable for her position. As for Castilla and myself, if Jack before he went away was going to be a hero, he was now actually become one ; we were fully persuaded that when at Port Louis the boats towed off the fire-ship with the musket-balls spattering in the water, it must have been Jack who sat in the stern ; and when the 'Conquestador' surrendered it must have been in terror at the sight of this youthful conqueror, terrible with his sword in his hand ; and when the 'Africa' blew up it was because the Spanish Admiral perceived that he could not hope to contend any longer with this young sea-lion ; and, considering the Admiral's want of spirit, it was nothing but the presence of Jack that saved the fleet from disaster. I began to draw pictures, representing episodes in the three actions in which our hero had taken part, such as Jack repelling boarders, laying about him with such an intrepid air as commanded terror and admiration in all who beheld it. Behind him stood the British tars, ready to back him up with cutlass, pistol, and pike. Or another, in which I displayed the two ships at close quarters, with grappling-irons, and Jack leaping singly upon the enemy's deck, a pike in one hand and a cutlass in the other ; and there was Jack laying the gun that was to hit the enemy between wind and water, and so sink her : he performed the operation with thoughtful face, the captain standing by, wrapt in admiration. They were wonderful pictures. Jack laughed at them, but did not deny that, perhaps, there might be truth in the subjects. I gave them to Castilla, who put them away. She hath since assured me that she hath kept them out of regard for the hand which drew them. That is doubtless true, since she says so. But I think there must have been, at the same time, some admiration for the hero of those designs.

I do not describe the joy with which the Admiral received the boy, nor the pleasure with which he listened to his account of the actions he had witnessed. As for the manner in which Jack sought out Mr. Brinjes, everybody knows the contempt with which the combatant branch regards the civil branch, though the surgeon's mate, by order of the Navy Office, is considered a gentleman, and messes with the midshipmen ; so that there was condescension in a midshipman visiting an apothecary. Yet, as Mr. Brinjes was an old friend, Jack could not but treat him with kindliness mingled with superiority. Moreover, he had by this time himself visited

the places of which Mr. Brinjes loved most to speak. He had seen the negroes of Port Royal and Spanish Town, and those of Bridgetown, Barbadoes; and of St. Kitt's; though as yet he had never seen the Guinea Coast. One is not afloat for nearly two years without learning and hearing things. So that for every tale which Mr. Brinjes had to tell, Jack had now half a dozen. And I remarked that, like the apothecary, Jack loved to figure as the hero in his own stories. This is a temptation to which men are all liable, and especially sailors; because, I suppose, they are looked upon by the world as certain to have had adventures; and there is no man in Greenwich Hospital who has never been wrecked, or cast away, or been attacked by savages and by sharks, or had a brush with pirates.

As regards the quality of these stories and the art of making and telling them, if there is any art in so simple a thing as the telling of a sailor's yarn, it must be owned that the apothecary showed himself the superior. For it is required of such a tale that there must be fighting in it, with much bloodshed, narrow escapes, starvation in boats, pirates, and desert islands. All of these were supplied by Mr. Brinjes, whereas poor Jack had as yet nothing but his three battles. Bess, you may be sure, came to sit with us in the room behind the shop, and to hear Jack talk. She sat in the window-seat, her hands folded in her lap, gazing at her hero all the time, and speaking not a word save when Mr. Brinjes or I ventured to interrupt the flow of Jack's manly conversation.

Two days after Jack returned, the promised fight with Aaron Fletcher came off in my presence, and that of Bess, who, I believe, was the chief instigator of the combat—having a vehement desire to see Aaron punished for certain disrespectful words spoken in Jack's absence.

He was a little older than his adversary, and now bigger of frame, and as hard as was to be expected of a young man who spent his days and nights chiefly in a fishing-smack—he called it a fishing-smack—between Ramsgate, or Leigh in Essex, and the coast of Holland or of France.

They fought in the gardens behind the Stowage. It is beneath the dignity of history to describe an encounter with fists between two boys. Sufficient it is to say that Jack took off his coat laughing, and the other scowling; that they fought for an hour, with some vicissitudes—Aaron, so to speak, carrying heavier metal, but Jack handling his guns with more dexterity; that Bess stood by, clapping her hands when Jack's fist went home, and taunting Aaron when he fell—which made both combatants the fiercer; that, finally, Aaron was disabled, and had to retire from the conflict by the dislocation of a finger, which gave Jack the victory. But both were so mauled and bruised, their faces so covered with blood and swollen, that the battle must have ended in neither being able to see.

'I'll fight you again—and again after that,' said Aaron, mopping his face, with dark and savage looks.

What did they fight for? Well: one was a gentleman, and the other a mechanic; one was a midshipman in the King's service, and the other was a smuggler. Surely, these things were enough. If you want more, remember that even at sixteen a youngster may fall in love and be jealous. Aaron was already in love with the black eyes of Bess, who was now nearly twelve, but like a Spanish girl in this respect, that at twelve she might have passed for fifteen at least. And Bess, who would have none of him, thought of nobody but our handsome Jack.

CHAPTER VI.

THE 'COUNTESS OF DORSET.'

With the return of the fleets, and the signing of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, came a great reduction of the Naval Estimates, which, in the year 1750, provided for no more than ten thousand men, instead of fifty thousand. This step, although it returned thousands of men to the merchant service, the coast service, the colliers, the fishing trade, and the river, sent back more than were wanted, so there was great distress with men out of work all round the coast, and a large increase of smuggling. Many regiments of marines were disbanded at the same time, and so men who, having been long engaged in active service, had lost the arts of peace and forgotten their former trades, were thrown upon the country seeking employment, and, for the most part, finding none. Again, from the dockyards were dismissed an immense number of artificers, such as skilled shipwrights, carpenters, figurehead-carvers, painters, decorators, and the like, besides a host of unskilled labourers, who had been receiving good wages, and now found themselves without work and for the most part without money. Add to this that the trade of those who get their living out of the ships and the sailors, and by navy contracts, was suddenly shrunk into nothing, like a bladder which is pricked, and you will understand why, though the country breathed and the merchants of London and Bristol rejoiced, the seaports and dockyard towns groaned and lamented. As for the shipwrights, there is always employment for some in one or other of the private building-yards—such as Pett's or Taylor's, or in the repairing-docks, as the Acorn and the Lavender; but what are these even when working their utmost compared with the King's yards and their continual demand in time of war? It is true that a large number of disbanded soldiers, marines, and artificers, received grants of land in Nova Scotia, and were transported thither. But there are never many in proportion to the whole number who can suddenly become farmers, and who fear not the

cold of that inhospitable place. As for the unfortunate sailors, there were, to be sure, always new hands wanted for the merchant ships; but a man cannot look to get a berth as soon as he desires; and other work they can do none. No one ever heard of a sailor following the plough, or becoming a shoemaker, or working in a carpenter's shop. It seems as if keeping the watch, bending the sails, and working the guns, make a man unfit for other kinds of work. The disbanded soldier may turn his hand to anything, but not the sailor. So that when his pay and prize-money are all spent—which never takes the honest fellow long, so ready is the assistance of his friends—he has nothing to do but to lean against the posts, or to stand about the riverside, waiting for a chance. Often for a lodging he is reduced to sleeping on the bulks in the open street, and, for his food, to take whatever may be given him by the charity of his fellows. And, at last, when this fails, if he cannot ship even on a hoy or a hay-barge, what wonder if he takes to running a fishing-smack over to France for brandy? And then one hears of a desperate affray with the King's officers on the Sussex coast; and these are the times when the roads become infested with footpads—men driven desperate by poverty, who might have remained honest fellows had they been kept to their colours, or to their ships; and in the houses of Deptford, where there had been plenty, and the laughter of little children, were now crying women and hungry babes, with the dreadful temptations of poverty and hunger. I am sure there is no more terrible temptation than this; let us never cease, rich and poor together, to pray in the words commanded, 'Give us this day our daily bread.'

There are some who think that the custom of disbanding the troops and paying off the men is an evil one, because, they argue, first, if you would secure peace be prepared for war, as is shown in lively fashion by the fable of Æsop; and if you are always ready to fight, the enemy will be less ready to give provocation; and, next, a better plan, if the forces must be reduced, would be to diminish them gradually, by suffering those to go who wished, and enlisting no more, so that speedily, and without injustice, an establishment on a peace footing could be secured. But in the Navy Office prudent counsels have never yet prevailed (I say this not of my own wisdom, but from general consent of those who have had opportunity of studying things naval), and I suppose will not, until some great calamity befall our country, and makes us call for neither Whig nor Tory, but for those who desire the greatness and the prosperity of these islands.

Sad, indeed, was the case of the younger officers—the midshipmen, like Jack—who had little interest, and now feared that they might never become lieutenants. The more choking it was, because everybody had been looking for a long war, with plenty of prize-money and quick promotion. And now, in the estimation of many, not only was peace signed, but it was assured and would be lasting; because, these sagacious politicians of the coffee-house

asked, why should France wish to make war again, having received not only so severe a lesson, but also terms of peace far more honourable than she could have expected? The events of the next few years have shown very plainly how anxious France has been to keep her word and to maintain peace. Perhaps, now that we have at last happily turned her out of Canada and the East Indies, and reduced her power in the West Indies, her turbulence may abate for a time. But one knows not; we are nearing the end of the eighteenth century, and we cannot tell what may happen before that end arrives. However, the merchant adventurer naturally desires peace, and therefore is ready to prophesy that peace will be lasting, because we are always glad to believe what we desire. I have heard that the activity of the French yards was never relaxed during these years of peace; certainly, they never commenced any war with more magnificent fleets than those which they sent to sea a few years later in the year 1756.

As for Jack, after being ashore for two or three months, and finding no prospect of employment, he began to hang his head, and to be despondent, longing to be afloat again, and seeing no chance. In truth, there was little in a landsman's life that he cared for, being, at this period, not much better than a sea cub, a species of animal little loved by any except those who know that he will grow into a lion. That is to say, he took no joy in reading, unless it was the description of a sea action—always, to my thinking, tedious to read. Jack, who did not think so, used to illustrate the history with the aid of walnuts placed in position, and showing, to his imagination, better than any drawing, how the fight was conducted. The gentle arts of poetry, music, painting, and dancing had no charms for him. He liked not the society of ladies, old or young, nor the polite conversation which pleases them; and as yet he had not felt the passion of love. I believe he was set against the sex by Mr. Brinjes, who loved no woman except such as had a black and shining skin, and lived somewhere about Old Calabar. As for Bess, she was the most congenial companion to him at this time, because she never tired of listening to his talk about the sea, and what he was going to do. But as for love, he had none for her at this time. Of this I am assured.

Everybody has heard of the 'Countess of Dorset'; how she set sail in order to navigate the great Pacific Ocean and never returned. and how for many years nothing was known of her fate any more than is known of the fate of Sir Cloudesley Shovel. It is matter for regret that the single officer who was saved out of that wreck and survived the incredible sufferings which followed should not have been able to narrate in lively and moving fashion the particulars of this grievous disaster. Surely, a history as instructive as that of Commodore Anson might be made of this voyage. But now, I suppose, it will never be written.

Soon after the peace, the 'Countess of Dorset,' which was lying

up in ordinary, was fitted out in Deptford Yard. She carried an armament of forty-four guns, and was a frigate well reported as a sailer and for behaving well in heavy weather; ships being, as is well known, capricious in this respect; so that you may construct two vessels of exactly the same measurements, on the same lines, and yet, while one is easily handled and is obedient to her helm, the other shall be lubberly and difficult to steer; and one shall sail fast and the other slow: so that when any vessel is launched, it is impossible to tell beforehand what she will be like, and one cannot judge by the behaviour of a sister-ship. As for her destination, it was as yet unknown; but some thought she was to form part of the Jamaica fleet.

One afternoon, however, the Admiral called Jack, and held a serious conversation with him.

'Thou art now, my lad,' he said, 'truly becalmed, and in the Doldrums; or, worse still, in a leeward tide, and drifting on the rocks. In a word, if a berth be not found before long, thou may'st give up all further hopes of the King's Navy. I am sorry for thee, lad. There is John Company, to be sure—they have a hundred vessels, they say—but their commanders are fond of their ease; and, besides, without interest in the India House, how can one hope for promotion? It would grieve me to see thee mate of a merchantman. Yet, what help?'

'I can ship as an able seaman, Sir, as soon as I am old enough.'

'Ay, ay! But we must hope for something better. Listen, my boy. I have this morning conversed with the Commissioner of the Yard, Captain Petherick, who has imparted to me a secret. The "Countess of Dorset" is bound for a cruise in the Southern Seas. I have therefore sent an application in thy name to the Navy Office. Because, Jack, though it is not the service I could have wished for thee, yet, seeing that there is little chance of anything better, we must e'en make the best of it, and if we get thee billeted on her as midshipman we shall be fortunate. The voyage will be long and tedious. There will be no fighting, unless—which I doubt—the captain judges it well to seek out and capture the Manila galleon. They say there are islands out there filled with black pirates and cannibals; but I never heard of any honour to be obtained in fighting these poor devils. When you have gotten across the Pacific Ocean, there may be engagements with Chinese and Malay fellows. They have stink-pots and poisoned arrows. You will have to fight them at close quarters with pike and cutlass and boiling pitch, as well as with guns. But where is the glory of such an action compared with an engagement, yard-arm to yard-arm, with a Frenchman or a Spaniard of equal weight?'

'I should like to go, Sir,' said Jack, his eyes kindling.

'The Lord knows,' continued the Admiral, 'when you would come back again! And meantime, while you and your company were cruising in unknown waters, another war might break out.

and you would lose your chance, which, indeed, would be the Devil.'

'But if no war break out, then my chance may be lost the other way.'

'It would so, Jack. Perhaps we might get thee a berth—but of midshipmen there are plenty, and of ships in commission there are few. Yet the Commissioner tells me they have secret intelligence that the French are busy in Toulon and Rochelle. What doth this mean if peace is to continue? And complaints have been received from New England of infractions by the French. Is this a sign of peace? However, we know not. The King grows old; the young Prince is reported to be of a pacific disposition—but talking is vain.'

Briefly, the Admiral's application proved successful. Jack was appointed to the 'Countess of Dorset.'

When Mr. Brinjes heard of this appointment and the sailing orders of the ship, he showed a strange emotion.

'What?' he asked. 'Thou, too, art going to the South Seas, Jack? Why, it may be that the ship—but I know not—'tis unlikely, or—which I doubt. Thou art young yet, Jack; but if I tell thee my secret, though without imparting, yet, the latitude and longitude, while in those seas, thinking of what I shall tell thee, and mindful of the future, thou mayest take observations, and when the ship comes home we will talk further of the matter. For look ye, my boy, I am sure that I shall not die before I have seen again that place—but wait until I have told thee. What? You think I am but a poor apothecary, admitted to sit among gentlemen because I can cure their gout for them, and feared by the common sort because I can bring rheumatism upon them? You shall see. You think I have nothing but the few guineas in my till. Why, then, listen, and keep the secret for me; though if all the world knew, no one would be one whit the for'arder. Yet keep the secret; and now, boy, reach me down the chart.'

CHAPTER VII.

MR. BRINJES CONCLUDES THE STORY OF HIS VOYAGE.

Those who will read this history through, and then consider the various parts of it, will not fail to be amazed with the manner in which Jack was prepared for the fulfilment of his fate and for the close of his life (if that hath yet happened) by a crowd of circumstances which seem to have indicated it and led him irresistibly. For, first, it was permitted to him—a rare thing—to make the acquaintance of two who had voyaged upon the South Seas—I mean as officers, and of the better sort; for of those who had set foot on Juan Fernandez, fought the Creolian Spaniards at Payta, Guayaquil, and Panama, and insulted their settlements in the

Philippine Islands, there were many in Greenwich Hospital and the Trinity Almshouses of Deptford. Of these two, one, the apothecary, would relate his adventures in a moving manner, so as to make a boy's cheek burn and his pulses beat. The other, it is true, was a phlegmatic man, but there were parts even of his narrative—as, for example, when the castaways built a crazy boat, thirty feet long, and put to sea only forty strong, yet resolved to attack the first Spanish vessel they sighted, though they had but three cutlasses and half a dozen muskets and a small cannon, for which there was no stand, so that it had to be fired from the deck; and for all their provisions nothing but stinking conger-eel, dried in the sun, and one cask of water, fitted with a musket-barrel, by which each man drank in turn—I say that there were parts of his narrative which would fire the boy, and make his eyes bright. For the hearing of such sufferings only stimulates a boy who is intended by nature for a sailor. Next, there were the books lent to him by Captain Petherick, all of voyages, especially in Oceanus Australis, and Magellanica. And, thirdly, he was, while yet a boy, to sail across the great Pacific Ocean, which is said to fill those who have once voyaged on its waters with a strange love and desire to return thither, if only to meet with shipwreck and starvation. What follows, however, was the story which Mr. Brinjes now completed—a strange story, truly.

'I told you,' he began, 'that we were driven off our course north of the latitude in which we hoped to sight the great Manila ship. She carried I know not how many cannon, and I know not how many hundreds of men. But we were a hundred and twenty strong, all well-armed resolute men; and they were Creolian Spaniards, a cowardly crew, who when they have fired their small-arms can do no more, and when the English lads board the craft fall to bawling for Quarter, and strike their flag. There is but one rule in these waters: it is to attack the Spanish flag whenever you find it, and to look for no resistance once you come to close quarters, unless the officers, which sometimes happens, are French; then they will fight. Now mark what happened to us. The same tempest which drove us so far north caught the Manila ship as well, of which we were in search, and drove her also out of her course, treating her even more roughly than ourselves. We sighted her one morning at daybreak. There could be no doubt about her; there are not many ships of her build in the North Pacific. As soon as we were near enough to make her out all hands were called to quarters, and we prepared for action with joyful hearts—loading the guns and small-arms, and sharpening cutlasses and pikes. As we drew nearer, and the daylight stronger, the sea being now quite smooth, save for a gentle swell, we perceived a strange thing—namely, that her mainmast and her foremast were gone by the board, only her mizen standing; her bows and bulwarks were stove in, and her rudder was lost. She was drifting about upon the water, helpless as a log. She had no sails set; most of her rigging was

cut away. We fired a shot by way of signal, but received no reply; then we drew nearer. Not a man could be seen. Were they all hiding down below, or were they hatching some treachery? We ranged presently alongside, cautiously standing to our guns, and expecting nothing less than a broadside. But the guns, on the upper-deck, at least, were not manned; nor was there a soul to be seen, or the least sign of life. However, our boarding party leaped aboard, with a shout, expecting some trick of the enemy. Boys, there was not a man left in all that great ship. How they got off—by what boats, or on what raft—I know not, nor did I ever learn. She was deserted; she was floating about these lonely seas, a great treasure-ship, with all her treasure still on board! Why, she was not ours by right of conquest; she was ours by the law of the sea, because she was a derelict. We were pirates, if you please, or rovers, or adventurers. Whatever we were, that ship was our own because we picked her up.'

'What!' cried Jack, 'no fighting?'

'None, my lad. On that voyage there was no fighting with the Spaniards from beginning to end. As for this great inheritance, into which we came without a question or a blow, 'twas all left undisturbed on board with the precious cargo of which it formed a part. Strange it was to walk 'tween decks, and see them filled with the bales of silks, the spices, the rich stuffs, that the galleon was carrying to Acapulco. There was also a beautiful collection of small-arms, and swords with jewelled hilts, pistols with carved stocks, brass carronades, and such carved work in wood, for the state rooms and the captain's cabin, as one could sell in London for its weight in silver, at least. There was also a great quantity of wine, which was seasonable, for our spirits were well-nigh drunk out, and there was no probability of our getting more. We took all the wine and the arms, and as much of the silks and embroidered stuff as every man pleased; so that we went about as fine as so many princes, with purple and crimson sashes. The spices we mostly left on the ship; but the powder we took out of her, and all her provisions. And then we found the treasure. It was packed in small iron-bound chests, in gold pieces-of-eight and other coins, worth, as near as I could calculate, judging from the weight, about two hundred and fifty thousand pounds of our money. Think of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds to be divided among a crew of simple rovers! When we first found this treasure, and understood how much it was worth—namely, allowing eight shares for the Captain, and eighteen for the officers, nearly two thousand pounds apiece for every man, we were amazed at our wonderful fortune, and looked at each other like stuck pigs. However, we got the boxes on board, and laid them safe in the Captain's cabin, and set fire to the galleon, which blazed furiously, and presently blew up, and so an end of her. And as for us, we sailed away, and began to feast and to drink, and to make merry. And for the first few hours, I think there was never so happy a crew in the world.'

'Well,' said Jack, 'if prize-money were all they wanted. But to have no fighting with the Spaniards—why, one would as lieve take the money out of a till.'

'There was a great deal of fighting. I said only that there was no fighting with the Spaniard.'

'What other fight was there, then?'

'That evening we made a great feast on deck, all the ship's company sitting down together to as noble a salmagundy, onions being still plentiful, as one would wish to see. And with the salmagundy—which is sailor's food, truly, yet I want no other as long as I live, unless it be lobscouse and sea-pie—we drank the finest wine, designed for His Excellency the Governor-General of the Manilas, that was ever drawn from cask. Such wine one may never hope to taste again. What? Topers who drink strong black port and Jamaica rum (which yet I love), what know they of the soft and luscious drink which these Papistical Spaniards enjoy daily, sitting in their cool and shady houses, while the negroes and the Indians work for them in the sun? But when the drink got into us, the quarrelling began. When rovers quarrel, they fight. The men were light-headed, to begin with, thinking of their great windfall; and the Spanish wine is heady when you have taken much more than a quart or two, and they very soon began to quarrel over the division of the money. For some wanted to tear up the articles, whereby the Captain took eight shares and the officers eighteen, and all to share-and-share alike. And then swords were drawn and pistols cocked; and those of us who had kept reasonably sober went hastily below. Among these were the first and second mates, and the bo's'n, and myself. But the Captain was mad with drink. We kept below, while the trampling and the fighting went on all night long, for they stopped only to drink, and then fought again like so many devils, not caring with whom they fought, still less for what cause. The men were resolute fellows, but they never showed half so much courage against the enemy as they did against each other; and those who had been in the morning the heartiest friends and brothers were at night murdering each other with the utmost ferocity.

'They stopped at last; not because they were appeased, but because they were tired; and all slept on deck, some lying across the dead and wounded. It was a strange sight when we ventured on deck, the work of fighting being over, and saw them in the moonlight all lying about among the cannon, mostly in the waist, dead and living together, the blood still running out of the scuppers. The man at the helm was killed, and lying over his wheel. There was no watch; there were no lights; all sails were set, and the ship was swiftly sailing over the smooth waters with no one to look out, no lights n the bows, and no one to care whether we struck on a rock or not. There were thirty wounded men, whom we carried below and dressed their wounds; but fifteen of them died, their blood being heated by the wine and the salt provisions.

'At sunrise most of the men woke up and shook off their drunkenness, and ashamed they were to find the Captain and twenty men killed by the night's quarrel. First they sat and looked at each other, sorry and angry. Then they took consolation, thinking there were still enough men to navigate the ship, and fight her, if necessary, and then someone whispered that there were fewer by twenty to share the treasure.

'So we threw the bodies overboard without any funeral service, and I dressed the hurts of those who were wounded; the men resolved to quarrel no more, and all shook hands together.

'I suppose the thought of the money filled all the men's minds, because in the afternoon, when the drinking began again, the quarrelling began. The Captain being dead, they could no longer quarrel over his eight shares; but the officers were left, and they began about their shares. Now, I am sorry to say that both mates, instead of running down below again with the bo's'n and me, stayed on deck and took part in the quarrel. That was a worse night than the other, because it began earlier. Ten more were killed that night, and a great many wounded. What was worse, the morning brought no cessation, but they fought all day long, and for three days and three nights, drinking all the time like devils, as if they desired that as many should be killed as possible, and as few left to divide the treasure. In the end, when they desisted, we were reduced to sixty men, most of whom had wounds of some kind, and some died afterwards of fever, so that we numbered no more than fifty. I suppose that such a thing hath never before happened, that a ship for four days and four nights should sail any course she pleased, being without a steersman, or a captain, or a watch, having all sails set, and yawing about as she pleased, just as the breeze changed, and so sailing all the time before the wind. It was surely a miracle that we were not all cast away and destroyed. At last, however, the men grew tired and sobered, frightened by the deaths of so many, and now awakened to the new danger that if we met the Spaniard we might not be able to fight him nor to protect our huge treasure.

'So we held a serious council. First, we were now all rich men, and it behoved us to think of getting home safely with our money, and to run no risks more than we could help, and not to go in search of other ships, but to keep out of the enemy's way.

'Did one ever hear before of an English crew keeping out of the Spaniard's way? But the treasure made cowards of us all. Every man valued his own skin because he was now the owner of so much wealth. Why, what had been before the fighting a share worth two thousand was now worth four, at least. Not a man among us but was worth four thousand pounds and more. Even if we had sighted another galleon I doubt whether we should have ventured to attack her. And the men grew moody and scowling, everyone sitting apart, counting his gains and wishing his shipmates dead, so that his own share should be greater. Never was a ship's crew

fuller of murderous thoughts and evil jealousies. Even the wounded men dying of fever could not die quietly, but must shriek and cry out for life, because they were now all made men.'

'Better have tossed the treasure overboard,' said Jack.

'As for our course, we had now sailed a good bit to the south, but we knew not, and we never knew where we were. Look at the chart. Here is the island of Donna Maria Laxara. We were driven north from that island, and we presently sailed south, no man regarding the navigation. The latitude I was able to calculate; but as for the longitude, that was lost, and we knew not how to recover it, there being no one on board except myself who could so much as read.

'After our council, however, we appointed watches, and attended somewhat to the sailing, keeping her course south, in hopes of fetching Juan Fernandez or Masa Fuera. But, Lord! we were hundreds of miles to the west, though we knew it not; and as for Juan Fernandez, we should none of us ever see that island again. So we sailed day after day, but slowly, because the winds were light. The sun now grew hot; we were within the Tropics. The men had somewhat recovered their spirits, and bragged what they would do when we got home, and how they would fling the money about. Some were for Kingston, but some for Portsmouth; and I have always felt compassion for the girls of Point that they never had the spending of this great haul. For my own part, I always knew that something was going to happen, for surely such a crew of murderers would never be suffered to get safely to port with so much wealth.

'The first thing that happened was that we were becalmed. I know not where, but I think somewhere hereabouts.' Mr. Brinjes pointed to a spot near the middle of the Pacific, far from any other track. 'We were becalmed so long that we drank out all the Spaniard's wine, and now had nothing to drink except water, and that so long in the casks that it was, so to speak, rusty. Also, we soon found that we had not a great quantity of provisions left; and that scurvy called the Lobillo showed itself, of which we lost two or three men. And now, if there was no more fighting, there was no more singing and making merry. The men amused themselves with gambling; some of them played away all their shares, but presently won them back, and then lost them again; or they passed the days, which were tedious, in fishing for sharks—the sea was full of them—sometimes they killed them for food, but one soon gets tired of eating shark; sometimes they played with them, for they would catch two, and put out the eyes of one, and tie their tails together, and so drop them into the sea, when it was pretty to see them pull different ways, and fight and bite at each other just like Christians. Or they would catch one and tie a plank to his tail, so that he could not dive under water or swim away without dragging the plank with him, and so went mad, and lashed the water in his rage. And strange things happened. One day, while we were still

becalmed, the needle began to turn all ways, as if the witches had got hold of it—the Jamaica Obeah men know that secret—and another day the sky turned violet colour, with green clouds, very terrifying, and in the night the sea was a blaze of light, so that we were all alarmed, and one young fellow went mad, and cried out that the Day of Judgment was come, and called upon the sea to hide him from the face of an offended God, and so jumped overboard and was drowned. I think we must have been becalmed for six weeks. At last, however, a breeze sprung up from the nor'-west, and so we continued our course, if that can be called a course which was sailing blindly, on an unknown sea.

'Jack,' Mr. Brinjes cried, 'it will be thy lot—wherefore I tell thee this history—to cruise upon these waters. Not upon the course which the Spaniards take, but west and south of their route. There wilt thou meet, as we did, with strange and beautiful islands filled with kindly people, who paddle in canoes and swim like fishes, and hold all things in common, and live naked. In those latitudes it is always summer all the year round, with warm balmy air; and nobody heeds the time, and there are always rich fruits to eat and delightful fish to catch. They have no religion, and therefore are not afraid; they have no knowledge of the ten commandments, and therefore know not the nature of sin, and have no conscience to trouble them: they have learned nothing of any future world, and therefore are not anxious; they have no property, and therefore know not envy; they have no diseases, except the incurable disease of age; although their lives are happy, they fear not death, upon which they never think; they neither murder nor rob. What is our modern civilisation, what is the politeness of the age, compared with such happiness as theirs? What is there a man can hope for better than warmth and plenty, the love of women, and the friendship of men, with constant health, sunshine and joy? Do they murder each other? Do they fight duels with each other? Do they gamble away their fortunes? Do they steal and rob? Do they entice away another's wife? Are they clapped into prison for debt, and kept there until they die? Are they hanged for forging, coining, and shop-lifting? Are they flogged at the cart-wheel for anything they do? Are they made to work all day so that another man may grow rich? Are they teased with wars? Must they be starved so that priests may get fat? Do they go in misery and anxiety all their days for fear of the Bottomless Pit?'—Mr. Brinjes enumerated many other things, which are not the blessings of civilisation, yet exist among us, and not among these savages. 'Why, for the mere joy of living among this people, and breathing their soft air, our men forgot even their great treasure and their jealousies, and became, as it were, foolish; they quarrelled no longer; they rejoiced to go ashore and court the friendship of these soft savages, and to give them beads, knives, fish-hooks, or any little thing, in return for which the people gave them everything they had; for a string of beads, or a piece of bright-coloured silk they would bring out all

they possessed; for a bottle of rum, they would, I verily believe, have sold their island. Ah!' Mr. Brinjes heaved a deep sigh. 'I have known true happiness on the African coast; but there the air is hotter and men's passions are fiercer—well, I love the fierce passion and the temperament which breaks suddenly into flame; but I have never seen or heard, anywhere, of any place where the folk are so gentle as in these seas and life is so easy and so sweet. Heaven keep them long from the accursed Spaniard.

'And as for wonders, I have seen strange things, indeed, which men would not believe. Boys, I do not lie; I have seen bats as big as rabbits, and terrible great serpents which hang from the trees head downwards, and have power by their breath—I know not how—by their breath alone, to draw wild beasts—nay, and man as well—towards them, and so to break their bones and devour them; calamaries, or squids, are there with arms ninety feet long—many have seen them, and avow the truth—which can clutch a whole ship and drag it under water; there are springs of water which have virtue to turn fish into stones; there are flying cats and women fish—yea, fish with heads and breasts like unto women, and tails like the mermaids'; there are shell fish big enough, each one, to dine a boat's crew, and yet leave meat to spare; there are birds'-nests so big that six men cannot span even one; there are beautiful lizards, of all colours, as big as calves. Am I lying to you? No, boys. There was an island where we gathered a pannier of earth for the cook's galley to lay under his fire. Would you believe that, six months afterwards, we found a bar of gold beneath it, melted out of this little bucket-full of earth? But we could never find that island again. As for the people, the men mostly go naked or nearly naked, and the women have a kind of petticoat made sometimes of feathers, and sometimes of skins, and they have hair so long that it trails upon the ground; their language is a jargon that no one can understand; and if they worship anything, which I doubt, they worship wooden images. Tasman found some of these islands, but he has never been where I have been. No living man—the rest being dead—has been where I have been. Tell me not of Captain Shelvocke! He only followed the Spaniard's track.

'We cruised about contentedly, leading a life like that of King Solomon himself, among these islands, how long, I know not, for we stayed sometimes for whole months off one island. Perhaps it was fifty years, but I think it was no more than two or three. There was no more talk of the treasure. Some of our crew died, some refused to leave the islands even for their share of the treasure, and preferred a black wife and a life of ease under a warm sun with palm-wine and pandang (which is their kind of food), to any more dangers upon the water. So at length, out of our company of a hundred and twenty there were but five-and-twenty left, among whom to divide the great sum of money. This would give ten thousand pieces each. But by this time the ship, poor thing, was fallen into disrepair, and most of our stores were now expended, so

that what with rotten cordage, which would hardly hold a sail, and a leak which she had sprung somewhere, which gained daily, and planks now so soft that you could put a knife into them as into a rotten apple, and her bottom covered with green weeds, like a ditch beside a hedgerow at home, I for one doubted whether she would hold together at all if bad weather came. But in these islands we never found any bad weather.

'By this time all our clothes were worn out. Stockings and shoes we had none, but no one wanted them. For coat and shirt and all, we had the bales of silk which we found on the galleon; and let me tell you that, in a warm climate, there is no wear like silk, being both soft and cool. We had suffered our beards to grow: we had left off carrying arms, and nobody quarrelled or fought. Our provisions were long since gone, but we had palm-wine, such as the islanders make, and pandang, and we were dexterous at fishing. If we left one island and sailed to another, it was only for the sake of change, for sailors are always a restless folk; and we thought of nothing but to continue the joyful, easy and happy life that we were leading.

'It was I, there being no officers left, who broke up this contentment, and called the men together to speak seriously. I pointed out to them very earnestly that we must resolve, and that immediately, whether we would settle upon some friendly island and break up the old ship, or whether we would without more delay attempt the voyage home. I told them that we were all rich men, and could take our ease for life, if only we succeeded in getting home; but that we had a leaky and crazy ship, with rotten cordage, worm-eaten planks, and foul bottom, and that we must first put her in some kind of repair before we could think of getting round Cape Horn, and if we did not speedily attempt these repairs the poor old barky would founder beneath us. The men lazily replied they cared nothing whether the ship fell to pieces or no, and were content to live for ever upon one of these islands among the blacks, of whose soft manner of life they were enamoured, and wanted no more fighting or tempests. Such softness stealeth over the souls of all who dwell in these latitudes. This is the reason why the Creolian Spaniard—he of Mexico, Cuba, or Acapulco—is so poor a creature as compared with the Englishman, for the heat and softness of the air have sapped his courage, and made him a coward. One or two among us, however, having still something left of courage, and some recollection of home, persuaded them to consent that we should, when we could find a convenient place, endeavour to heel the ship over and scrape her, stop the leak if we could, and make her shipshape for rougher weather.

'A few days afterwards, we came to a small archipelago, or collection of small islands. They were not the coral islands, which lie low, and are surrounded by a reef of coral, but were all like hill-tops, rising sheer and steep out of the water, green and wooded to the top, and apparently uninhabited. In one of these we found a

curious natural dock or basin, deep and narrow, for all the world like the Greenland Dock at Redriff, and as suitable for our purpose as if we had made it ourselves. Here we resolved to make our dockyard, and to begin by heeling over the ship to get at her bottom. Wherefore, in case of accident, it was first agreed that we should put the treasure ashore in the only boat we possessed, the great storm having stove in the others. We lowered the boxes, and put in the boat five men, of whom I was one, with intent to row ashore, lay the gold in some safe place, and then return to tow the ship into this creek, or rocky natural dock. So we put off, thinking no danger, and rowed to land.

'Now, mark what happened. The ship was lying, when we left her, in smooth water, all sails furled. There was no wind, not a breath of air; if we had dropped our kedge, which we could not, because there was no bottom, the ship would have ridden anchor apeak. The time of day was afternoon, when air and water are at their stillest; and she was in a kind of channel or narrow sea, with these islands all around, which I should say were quite desolate and uninhabited, yet full of trees and fruits, with plenty of fresh water. We had no more than the length of a furlong to row, the water being deep and the shore of our island shelving steep down into the sea. We landed, hauled up the boat for fear of accident, and began to carry ashore the boxes, in order to lay them together under the trees. You think, perhaps, that a treasure of two hundred and fifty thousand pieces-of-eight is a mighty great matter. So it is, yet they may all be stowed in a few small boxes. We laid them down, then, and left them (no one being on the island except ourselves) at the foot of a palm.

'And there, my lads,' Mr. Brinjes added slowly, 'there they are to this day. For sure and certain I am that no ship hath been among these islands since. And I know that I could find the place again.'

'Why did you leave the treasure there?'

'You shall hear. When we got down to the shore again, a strange thing—nay, a miracle—had happened. The ship, which we left, as I said, only a furlong from the land, was now—as near as we could guess—two miles. She had none of her canvas spread; there was no breeze to speak of, and yet she was slipping through the water away from us at six knots an hour, as near as we could guess. Wonderful it was to see a ship, without wind or sails, moving so fast. Whether it was witchcraft—which I sometimes think—or a strong current, which may have been the cause, I cannot tell; but our ship had slipped away, and left us behind. We rowed after her; but a little boat, with one pair of oars, cannot overtake a vessel going six knots an hour, with two miles and more between. Then we thought to make the crew put the ship about, if they could. We shouted and made signals; but, so far as we could discern, no one on board noticed. Perhaps the men were all bewitched, as, I think, must have happened; perhaps they were drinking or sleeping, because in those days they generally spent the

time in sleep, whenever they were not drinking or fishing. She seemed to move faster and faster, and the evening was coming on. The sun got low; we had only time to row ashore before the darkness was upon us; and the last we saw of the poor old ship was the sight of her spars with the sinking sun behind them, and the red sky above, and the water spread out before us like a sheet of copper.

'What became of that ship and her company, I know not. But I doubt not that the craft is broken up, and the crew are all dead long ago. For either she struck a reef and was wrecked, and the crew drowned, having no boat; or—which may very well have happened—the leak grew upon her, and she made so much water that she foundered; or they may have made a raft and landed on some island, where they lived, and, in due course, died of too much palm-wine. And this was the best that could happen to them.

'As for us five men who were left upon the island, we hoped at first that the ship would come back for us, but she did not; then we made up our minds to stay there, and we built a kind of house, and made ourselves easy, and fished, and made pandang. No man need starve upon these islands. But, after a while, we grew tired of the life, and so resolved to attempt escape. So we buried the treasure at the foot of the palm where we had first laid it, and on the trunk we cut a mark; then we rigged a sail of palm leaves, caulked the boat with cocoa-fibre, took some water and such provisions as we could lay up in store, and so left our island and sailed eastward. We were still among islands, and we sailed among them for many weeks—I know not how long. For still, when we were out of sight of one island, we would sight another and yet another, but not all friendly, nor all so soft and affectionate as those we had left behind us. So we crept on, from shore to shore and from cape to cape, until at last we reached the open sea, and no land in sight at all, and presently no provisions.'

'And what happened then?'

'My lads,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'it is a terrible thing to be at sea with no provisions either to eat or to drink. Those who have water may go on for a long time; though I have been told that the body presently swells up and grows restless, and one must move about—which, in a small boat, is difficult. But to have neither food nor water! Then the men's eyes grow fierce and eager: horrible gnawing pains tear them to pieces. All day long they gaze upon the water for a sail, though they know, as we knew, that there can be no sail in those parts. At night, they sleep not; but groan and wish it were day. Then the pains increase, and one would willingly die but for the agony of death: and then the men cease looking upon the ocean, but look in each other's faces—none daring to say what is in every man's mind.'

Here he was silent for awhile.

'All this time we had a steady gentle breeze, so that we sailed easily over smooth water, and all the time we were followed by a shark, which never left us, and was a certain prognostication of death—which we knew and understood. My lads, when that boat

was picked up—which was by a Spanish brig, sailing for the port of Acapulco –there was but one man left. All the rest had parted their cable, and the shark had eaten them—that is, some parts of them. The survivor hath never told anyone how he kept himself alive. Perhaps he was able to catch a few fish; perhaps he caught a wild bird; perhaps it rained, and he caught the water as it fell.

If ever you do pray for yourself, Jack—but it is best to take your own luck and to pray for others—pray that you be never condemned to sail in an open boat without provisions.' I have read, in some book of shipwrecks, that sailors have been known, in the extremity of their hunger, to kill each other for food. Did Mr. Brinjes and his boat's crew resort to this dreadful method?

'As for the treasure,' he concluded, solemnly, 'I have bequeathed

it, Jack, to thee and to Bess Westmoreland, here, in equal parts. We will sail together, some day, and dig it up. I am old; but I shall not die until I have seen those seas again. We will go together, Jack, and thou shalt be rich. But even now thou art going thither, happy lad! When thy ship comes home, we will get a brig, somehow, and sail away together—Captain Easterbrook in command—and steer for those islands. I know not their longitude, but as to latitude, I am very sure they are about the parallel of 20° S. Oh! I shall find that archipelago. I cannot die until I have breathed those airs again and found the treasure! Jack, thou art heir to a greater estate than any man in England can boast. There is no Earl or Duke who shall hold up his head beside thee. Thou shalt be a Prince, and Bess shall be a Princess.'

He rolled up his chart, and returned to his chair and his pillows, sinking into them with the exhausted air which made one perceive that he was already arrived at extreme old age.

'Forty years ago!' he groaned. 'Where are they gone, those forty years which have taken away my strength? They made me a slave in Acapulco—a slave to a Creolian Spanish devil, who daily flogged and kicked me. Jack,' he sat upright, and his eye flashed fire, 'when we have recovered the treasure we will burn the town of Acapulco, and roast alive every Spaniard in it. Oh, that I could have then got back to the island! But that I could not; and very soon I perceived that I must somehow escape, unless I was to be a slave for life, worse than a negro slave, and made to change my religion or burn. This, though I have lived among the islands like a Pagan, I was unwilling to do. I therefore ran away, and committed myself to the Indians, by whom I was taken across the Isthmus of Panama, where I lived in the woods among my friends the savages for two years and more, before I could find an English ship among those which came trading for mahogany to the coast of Yucatan which would take me off. So that of all that long journey I brought back to Jamaica with me but one thing—my blue stone for the cure of snake-bites.' He pulled it out of his pocket. 'When you are bitten by any of the reptiles and insects of the forest, even by the most venomous, you may apply this stone (I have tried it on myself after a deadly snake-bite), which sticks on the place, and doth not fall off till it hath sucked up all the poison, when it drops of its own weight, and must be put into milk before you can use it again. Forty years ago! When I was young and could enjoy! Life mocks us, Jack. Sometimes I think that we are the sport and the laughter of the gods; but we know nothing. It flies before you have more than tasted of its joys. Give me fifty years more—only fifty years—and set me on the African coast among the Coromantyns, and I will find the secret which their wise women know. It is in the African forests that the herb grows which can cure all disease, even the disease of old age. With my treasure I could buy it, or find it, or compel them to yield it up. Happy boy! happy boy! Go breathe those airs of heaven, and gaze upon those

purple islands! If thou lightest upon an archipelago somewhere in latitude 20° S., where the islands are like hilltops covered with wood, search for one which has on its north side a creek like a natural dock, then look for a palm-tree marked with a cross, and dig beneath it for a treasure. But if thou dost not find that island, then when thy ship comes home we will go together and seek for it, and find the treasure—thine inheritance!'

CHAPTER VIII.

THE 'COUNTESS OF DORSET' SAILS.

'I ALWAYS knew, said Jack, 'that Mr. Brinjes had been a pirate. I believe he was surgeon to Bartholomew Roberts, who was killed by Captain Sir Ogle Chaloner in the "Swallow." Wherefore he ought, if he had his deserts, to be now hanging in chains with his brother pirates on the Cape Coast. Fifty of them there

are dangling in a row. Now we know that he is a cannibal as well, because it is certain he must have eaten up the other four men in the boat. I wonder how the last two determined the matter. And we know that he is the possessor of a great fortune buried under a palm-tree, on an undiscovered island in the South Seas. It is as useful to him as a bag of diamonds in the moon.'

'But he says that he shall sail with you in search of it.'

'Likely, likely,' said Jack. 'Who knows what may happen? He is, I take it, now a hundred years old. He keeps himself alive by his craft. If he was going to die I suppose he would begin to repent. As for his treasure, what do I care for his pieces-of-eight, unless it were to buy a frigate and man her with a gallant crew, and go fighting the Spaniards and the French?'

They were prophetic words, but this we knew not. Yet you shall hear.

Then the 'Countess of Dorset' sailed away with Jack as one of her midshipmen, upon her long and perilous voyage. She was under orders to sail by way of the Cape of Good Hope, and to survey the coast of that vast unknown continent or island called in part New Holland and in another New Guinea. This accomplished, as far as might be possible, her captain was instructed to cross the ocean and explore that other great island called New Zealand. She was to search after and report upon places which might be of advantage to the British flag. After this she was to continue her voyage of discovery even into the antarctic fields of ice; to penetrate as near to the South Pole as possible, and she was to return by doubling Cape Horn. So that, had she come home in safety, her crew would have circumnavigated the globe.

It would seem, I venture to think, consistent with the dignity as well as with the interest of a great maritime people, such as the English, were such voyages as this always afoot, so that, when one exploring ship returned, another might be despatched; undertaken not only for the discovery of unknown continents and islands, but also for the enlargement of commerce and the enriching of this realm. In the old days the world was nothing but the Mediterranean with the lands lying around that great sea. Man has extended it east and west, north and south, so that we can now boast that we know all the islands of the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean—navigators say that in those seas there remains no more to be found—with the countries of Asia (even China and Japan have been described and exactly mapped by the Roman Catholic missionaries). We know the eastern coast of North and South America from Labrador to Cape Horn, and we are able to lay down the harbours and river mouths of Africa, though of its interior little has yet been visited.

There will perhaps come a time, if the English take the matter in hand without fear of Spain, when the whole world shall be fully explored, so that there will be nothing left to discover, neither

strange races nor strange creatures, nor wonderful plants. My father, who had in his library a copy of the great 'Mappa Mundi,' or Atlas of the late learned Mr. Senex, would often converse seriously on the possibility of finding, in some hitherto unexplored part of the world, the long-lost Ten Tribes, still, he would fondly imagine, practising the Levitical Law in its Mosaic integrity, without adding to it or subtracting from it, and in ignorance of the glosses introduced by Rabbinical and Talmudic doctors. He looked to find this people in vast numbers (in conformity with Prophecy) somewhere between the springs of Tigris and Euphrates, or, perhaps, more to the north, and even on the slopes and among the valleys of the mountains called Caucasus; but, he would confess, without crediting the idle legend of the Sambatyon river, which seems a monstrous story, they may have wandered farther afield, and perhaps are now on some remote island of the Black Sea, the Red Sea, or even the Indian Ocean. 'The recovery of these tribes,' he said, 'would be a great consolation to pious persons, and would doubtless prove a mighty weapon in the hands of the faithful; or, apart from the Israelites, though this people must be ever foremost in our thoughts, it may very well be that there exists in some remote countries, which have had no intercourse with the outer world for many centuries, some people who were once a branch of the Roman Empire, and have never heard of its decline and fall, who knew nothing of Christ or Mohammed, or of the Hindoo superstitions, but still worship after the manner of the Greeks and Romans. 'Twould be strange, indeed, to witness the rites of Jove and Venus; those of the great Sun god; of Ceres, the goddess of fertility; of Bacchus, the god of joy and wine; and of Pan, of whose death these people perhaps know not: or it would be strange to see them flocking to consult the oracles: and one would willingly, if it were allowed to a Christian, be initiated into the mysteries of Eleusis, long since lost, though some have pretended that they are concealed in the Sixth Book of Virgil's "Æneid," and some still look for them in Apuleius' "Golden Ass." Again, there must be somewhere on earth the wandering Jew, named Cartaphilus, Ahasuerus, or, according to others, Isaac Laquedem, who is credibly reported to have been last seen, and that not so very long ago, in Paris. To sit down and talk with him, if his memory is still good, would be like finding a Fifth Gospel. Or there may be in the interior of that great southern continent which they call New Holland great and powerful nations, with another civilisation than our own, and arts of which we know nothing. We have, it is true, invented gunpowder, the use of which, to rude people, appears a kind of magic; and we have contrived by our wit many ingenious mechanical devices. But there are, surely, many other secrets which man can compel Nature to surrender; and there may be tribes which possess these secrets—as, for example, if one may so speak without blasphemy, the command and control of lightning, which now strikes here and there at random, as we say, if anything

in this world is suffered to be at random; and the mastery over the other elements of the earth—the wind, the storm, the ice, the snow, which now only obey the word and will of the Lord. Or there may have been discovered in these countries—who knows?—a universal medicine for all diseases; for, since death is the necessary result of decay or disease, when it is not accident, there may be races who have discovered some herb or simple by virtue of which natural decay may be prevented, and so man may continue to live as long as he please; which, for the devout Christian, who looks forward to his eternal rest, would not be long. Or there may even be found offshoots or colonies of such ancient races as the Phœnicians, of which stock came the Carthaginians; and so we may, perhaps, at length learn by what accident this branch of the Semitic race—a most civilised and cultivated branch—hath left no literature at all, either of poetry or history; or of the Ethiopians, called by Homer, for some reason unknown to us, blameless. They were expelled from Egypt by the people whose descendants are now called Copts. Without doubt, they were an interesting people, and remarkable for their primitive virtue, which may have survived. I would look for them on the western shores of the Red Sea. Or somewhere in the world, perhaps in the Pacific Isles, or in the unknown heart of Africa, or the great continent of the Southern Seas, there may be races of giants, dwarfs, and amazons, for there must certainly be some foundation for the stories of such people. There is also the far-famed kingdom of Prester John, which some will have to be the Empire of Abyssinia, whose King and people are known to form a branch of the Christian Church. They boast themselves to be descended from Prince Menelek, son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, which may possibly be the case, although Holy Writ affords no warrant for the belief. One would be pleased to learn also, if the many strange stories narrated by the Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, be true, or whether he hath repeated things which were merely related to him, as is done by Herodotus. And again, there is the journey of Mandeville, in which are described men with but one leg, and hippotains, or creatures half horse, half man; so that there may be truth in the legends of Centaurs, though some have thought them to have been merely a people loving horses and addicted to riding.

'Then to descend to creatures: there are existing somewhere, perhaps, whether in the hot and burning forests of South America, through which the great river Oroonoko flows, or in the African deserts, creatures like the winged dragons of which so many stories have been told, with salamanders and other monsters; and in the sea, hideous monsters with bodies many fathoms long, the vast mass floating like an island on the ocean: and great calamaries, of which sailors have reported some with long arms capable of seizing and dragging down to the bottom of the sea, ship, cargo, crew, and all.'

Thus my father would discourse at length; but Jack hath assured us that in this terrible voyage of his, they encountered

nothing bigger than a whale or more terrible than a shark; nor any winged dragon, or serpent more dreadful than the kinds already known; while as for Ten Tribes, or for any men who know more than the Europeans, or have acquired a form of civilisation worthy our attention, he does not believe that there are any such.

We looked not for any news of the 'Countess of Dorset' for three years at least; because, on the voyage on which she was bound, there are no friendly ports where a vessel may receive or send home despatches, though, doubtless, many where fruit and water may be obtained. We did not expect, therefore, to hear any tidings of her until she should return. It was not until fully three years had passed away that we first began to ask ourselves when the ship might be expected to return.

But no news came of the ship, and no letters from those aboard her. The fourth year passed, and still there came no news; and so the fifth, and still no news.

Then those who remembered Jack Easterbrook, and loved him, began to misdoubt that something had happened to the ship; and, when the sixth year had almost gone without a word, there were few who kept up heart, or had any hope in them. As for the Admiral, he mourned for Jack as for his own son, believing that he must have been cast away with all the ship's company. 'For,' he said, 'had they not all miserably perished, some intelligence would, ere now, have reached us. At the Navy Office they have written off the ship as wrecked, and the officers and crew as dead men, and the clerks have told the women who came to ask after their husbands that they may e'en look after fresh husbands; though this proves nothing. And, though ships have been known to be delayed and forced back by continual and contrary winds, or caught by storms and losing their masts, yet did I never hear of a ship overdue for three years, and then arriving safe. Long ago the underwriters, had she been a merchant-vessel, would have paid off the insurances. No, gentlemen, there is no hope. Our boy is drowned!'

'We were wrecked upon the island of Juan Fernandez,' said Mr. Shelvocke, 'where we lived, in great misery, on eels, the entrails of seals, and such like for many months; and should still be living there but for the armourer and carpenter, who built for us a craft, thirty feet long, in which we embarked, having no other provision than conger-eel, cut into strips, each strip dipped into the sea and dried in the sun. A more loathsome food 'twere difficult to find. Yet we escaped, taking the Spanish ship "The Santo Jesu," and so came safe home again.'

'Then,' said the Admiral, to whom this story was not new, 'the boy may still live, or, at best, he may linger on some island among the savages, living on shell-fish and the like; and so is as good as dead, since we shall never see him more—poor lad! poor lad! a braver boy never stepped.'

'With submission, Admiral,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'That something must have befallen the ship I do not doubt. It is a sea full

of coral reefs, sunken rocks, strange currents, and, in the northern and southern parts, there are, it is certain, sudden storms. We cannot guess what has happened; still, I am sure that the boy will come back to us. Ask your old negress, Admiral, who is a witch; ask Philadelphy if that boy's eyes when he sailed away were the eyes of one who is going to his death. She can read the eyes of men—ay, and has often read for me, sitting in my shop, in the eyes of those going forth to sea whether they will come back or no—and never once has she proved wrong. Now, Admiral, I have examined the chart over and over again; but can get no comfort from it, nor any clue to what may have happened. An ocean where there are no ports, and where there is but one vessel sailing across it, like the South Pacific, where the "Countess of Dorset" sailed upon — those waters can give no help. But that boy, Admiral, has not been drowned. And he will return to us. His fortune is long and stormy, as Philadelphy, at my request, hath proved in many ways; by the bowl, by the cards, by the mirror, and by the glass ball. I have also had his nativity calculated, and I learn the same story. And, by what small arts and knowledge I possess, I have learned that his life will not be cut off untimely. What, gentlemen? Do the stars lie? Is there no truth in the magic of the Mandingo woman?'

It is a consolation to know that a happy end to anxiety is certain, even by witchcraft. Yet Jack did not return, and no news concerning his ship.

Many of the crew were Deptford men—volunteers after the peace. Their wives, or widows, on the advice of the clerks in the Navy Office—who were now without hope concerning the ship—married again. This, however, is common among seafaring folk, and the worst that happens, should the husband come home again, is generally no more than a fight and a cracked skull, with forgiveness over a bowl. Nay, there have been known cases in which the true husband has contentedly renounced his wife, and either married another woman or gone away to sea again; perhaps to seek out a new wife in some other port.

These six years, as you may suppose, were not spent at home without changes. The elders seem to stand still and suffer no change during six years, unless it is that their locks, if they had any to show, would grow grey; but in these days of wigs and shaven cheek there is nothing (happily) to mark the approach of age, save trembling limb and crowsfeet round the eyes, which cannot be concealed. As for me, I was fourteen, or thereabouts, when the 'Countess of Dorset' sailed away; and therefore, after six years, I was twenty, and a man grown, though not to the robust stature promised by Jack when he left us. Castilla was now past seventeen, and, in my eyes, more beautiful, as they say, than the flowers in May. Nothing surprised me more when Jack returned (for I promise you that the black witch was right, and Jack did return) than his coldness towards this nymph. If a fine

complexion, eyes of heavenly blue, melting lips, rosy cheeks and smiling mouth, with light hair curling naturally about her forehead, and a figure slight and tall: in short, if Hebe herself—who was the goddess of youthful and virginal beauty, as Venus is the goddess of that riper beauty which is no longer ignorant of love—was lovely, then was Castilla lovely at that time, and as sweet, gracious, and obliging as ever was Hebe, the cup-bearer to the gods. Why, when Jack came home, I looked to see him fall at her feet at the mere contemplation of so much beauty. But no; he was stark insensible. Castilla moved him not; and this for a reason that you shall shortly learn.

It was during this six years, to speak for a moment of myself, that I passed through the greatest trouble of my life, and touched the highest happiness that I could hope or pray for. My father had, as he thought, set me apart for God's sacred ministry, as Samuel was set apart, from childhood. He had taught me from the first to consider this the holiest vocation for man, as, doubtless, it must be confessed by all; and he had taught me as much Latin and Greek, with the composition of Latin verses, as I was permitted by my natural parts, which are not great, to acquire. And while he perceived very well that it was not in my power to become a great scholar like himself, he comforted and encouraged me by the consideration that piety and virtue are within the power of every Christian man, together with the other qualities which adorn the sacred profession of priest or minister.

When I grew to the age of sixteen or thereabouts, the time at which a boy generally begins to bethink himself of the future, I found, first, that I could not look forward to the cassock without a feeling of repugnance; and, secondly, that there was no other manner of work in which I took any interest, save one, which for a while was not to be thought of. Indeed, I did not myself consider it possible, though I knew very well that there were some—nay, a good number—who live creditably by exercising the art of painting, which was the only thing I loved.

By this time I was arrived, by continual daily practice, and by some natural aptitude, at a certain proficiency, so that my drawings of ships and boats and the like were, if one may say so, creditable and fit to be shown to any judge of such matters. But when I ventured to hint, in my father's hearing, that a life spent in this occupation, which he considered frivolous, might be full of delight to one who loved drawing, the thing was received with so much displeasure that I dared not for some time to open the subject again, but went on, under his directions, making bad Latin verses and reading Cicero and Virgil.

I then began to consider my destined profession with such a distaste as amounted to abhorrence, insomuch that, had I persisted in taking those vows which my father intended and designed for me, I should have committed a most deadly sin, if not the sin which is unpardonable. And yet I ventured not to open my

conscience to my father, fearing his displeasure, and knowing very well how much he had set his heart upon my following in his footsteps. I was at length encouraged to do so, however, partly because it smote my soul with contrition to go on pretending acquiescence in my father's wishes, and partly by a thing which made my project appear more likely of success, or, at least, less likely to end in disastrous failure.

There was a certain John Brooking, of Deptford, now very well known to painters, and to such fame as belongs to modern painters. He was about ten years older than myself, and at first was but a shipwright's assistant in the Yard; but had no heart for his work, and wasted his time in drawing the workshops, the docks, the timbers, bulkheads, anchors—everything that there is to be drawn in the Yard, even giving up to his Art the whole of his Sundays. He was a good-natured, harmless kind of man, who cared little for himself, and had no ambition except to paint all day, to earn enough for his daily wants, and to spend the evenings drinking with his friends. He presently left the Yard, and went away to London, designing to sell his drawings. But, before he went, he gave me great help in teaching me, so far as he himself knew them, the elements of perspective, with certain simple rules of geometry, and the arrangement of lights; and showed me how to lay on water-colours, and how to get the proper tints, and how to produce the effects I desired. I know not how he lived for a while; but, one day, I met him in the streets of Deptford, and he told me, with glee, that he had found a man—a dealer in pictures—in Leicester Fields, who would buy his drawings of ships, as many as he chose to paint at a guinea a-piece (N.B.—He afterwards found that this honest dealer sold the same pictures for ten guineas a-piece), and that therefore he was now a made man, and had nothing to do but to go on with the work he loved, and paint every day. Which he did, until he died of a consumption, brought on, I suspect, by much strong drink. However, I went to London and visited him one day at his lodging. He had a single room at the top of a house in a court close to the Fields, where his friend the dealer had his shop; it was a good-sized room with a large window looking north, which is the best direction for light. This was his painting-room and his living room, bedroom and kitchen—all in one. Never was a room so littered and untidy and dirty. But John Brooking cared nothing for dirt. He worked there all day long, so long as the light lasted; or he made sketches and studies by the riverside, which he afterwards made into finished pictures in this simple studio, where he stood at his easel, never tired, a knitted night-cap on his head, and in his shirt-sleeves, and a tobacco-pipe, broken short off, between his lips, for he loved tobacco as much as any old gipsy woman.

Well, his success, such as it was (but indeed I thought of nothing, then, except how just to live by my work so only that I could do the work I desired to do), inflamed me, and I resolved to

tell all to my father; which, to make a long story short, I did, though with many misgivings.

He is dead now; and, I doubt not, hath gone to the rest provided for the faithful. It is a place where my love and gratitude may not reach him. I have never passed so unhappy a time as that when it seemed as if I must continue my preparation for the University, in order to perjure my soul by declaring falsely that I was singled out by Heaven to follow the holy calling of a minister; and I have never felt so truly happy as on that day when my father, with tears in his eyes, bade me vex my soul no longer, for it should be with me as I wished.

So I left Deptford, and went to London, to become a pupil of the celebrated Mr. Hayman; and I hope that I have since done justice to the instructions of that great painter. But I came home often—partly to sketch among the ships, and partly to see Castilla.

Enough of my affairs, which concern this story but little.

CHAPTER IX.

AARON FLETCHER.

The sixth year came—nay, it had run half its course and more; yet no news of the 'Countess of Dorset.' And there was no longer any doubt that the ship was cast away, and all the crew long since dead. As for Jack, who had been our hope and our pride, of whom we had said that a youth so brave and so masterful must needs rise to greatness, and bring credit upon himself and those who had been his friends, none now ever spoke a word. Or if they did, it was but to say that the loss of the boy had brought age upon the Admiral, and that 'twas great pity a youth of such goodly promise should thus untimely perish. The stars had lied; witchcraft and magic were proved of no avail.

Jack was dead. In the club at the 'Sir John Falstaff' his ship was never talked of, nor was there any further speculation as to her course, for the Admiral's sake, even by Mr. Brinjes. And, by all the world, the boy was well-nigh forgotten. When the greatest of living men, he whose name is most in men's mouths, dies, the daily life of the world is no whit changed; and his place, even in his own work, whatever that may be, is speedily filled up. What then can one expect in the case of a boy?

But in Mr. Brinjes' parlour, where now Bess Westmoreland sat every afternoon, for company, and to cheer the old man's heart, Jack was not forgotten. These two talked about him still. More than this—superstitiously trusting to the negress's magical practices—they confidently expected that he would return again. Well, in the event the forecast proved true; but, if we are to trust to such an oracle, where is religion? If an ignorant negro woman is permitted to find out, by her witchcraft, the secrets of the future, and to foretell them, what shall become of religion? Then, fare-

well, faith; farewell, prayer; farewell, trust in Divine Providence; farewell, learning, since ignorance succeeds where wisdom fails!

In six years Bess had, like Castilla, grown from a child to a woman. She was now in her seventeenth year, not yet filled out to the fulness of her figure, but already tall and shapely. If she had been dressed in rags, she would have commanded attention; but she was careful of her dress, and went always becomingly attired, though not above her station (the coral beads that we know of were placed away in some drawer or box out of sight). She was so tall that she topped her father (but he was round-shouldered) by a head and neck, and there was no girl in all the town within her height by an inch and more; she bore herself like a lance, so straight and upright was she. Her nose and chin looked as if they had been carved by a skilful sculptor out of marble, so clear and delicate were they; her eyes were black, as was her hair; but rosy red her lips, and pearly white her teeth. Like many black-haired women, her cheek was full, but somewhat pale in colour, and her throat was white, not with such a whiteness as lent another charm to the complexion of Castilla, which, although of a sweet and delicate white, yet glowed with a rosy warmth. The whiteness of Bess was a colder or deeper white—a white that does not reflect the light, such as some Italian painters have delighted to portray; her hands were small, and her forehead low, as the Greeks loved it; as for her eyes, they were soft and deep, save when she was roused, and then, indeed, they flashed fire and flame. As became her station, she wore no hoop, and dressed her hair in a simple knot; but she walked as if her limbs were of springing steel; and I am sure no Princess in a hoop and patches could have walked more like a goddess; her arms, when she was at work, were the whitest ever seen, and the best shaped.

I have never disguised, and shall never disguise, my belief, though Castilla will not agree with me—that is, she assents, but without warmth—that Bess was the most beautiful girl then living; and this I can the more fairly say, because I was never in love with her, any more than a painter is in love with his model. As for love between Bess Westmoreland and myself, that was always impossible. Yet, for suitors, she never lacked any, though she sent all away, not with discourtesy, or with mockery, or with mirth, as some girls will—as if it is a fine thing to dash the hopes of an honest lad, and as if lovers can be had for the trouble of picking them up—but with firmness and with dignity, being too proud to encourage them, or to suffer them to believe that she wanted their wooing. Some of them were substantial and reputable men, whom the daughter of a mere Penman might have been proud to marry. Why, if he had died, what would she have done for her daily bread? To my own knowledge, one of her wooers was gunner's mate in the King's Navy; another was a master wheelwright in the King's Yard; a third was foreman in the Greenland Dock; and, I dare say, there were more of equally respectable

place. It became a proverb that there was no man good enough for Bess Westmoreland; and the other girls, who might otherwise have been envious of her charms, regarded her with open admiration, because she was not only much more beautiful than themselves, yet wished to carry away none of their sweethearts.

One lover alone, out of all, stuck by her, and refused to take her 'No' for an answer. This was Aaron Fletcher, now grown into a young giant, who carried on his father's business of boat-builder, yet was of a roving disposition, and kept his smack at Gravesend, or at Leigh, in which he went fishing. Those, however, who spoke of those fishing voyages, were apt to laugh, and to ask why that fishing-boat never came back by daylight.

'I have told you,' said Bess, 'I have told you a hundred times, Aaron, that I will not listen to you. Wherefore, go away in peace, and trouble me no longer. Why, there are dozens of other girls in Deptford, and plenty better-looking than me would take you, and that joyfully.'

'There are not plenty for me,' he replied. 'I want but one. And, Bess, I shall never give up asking. There's nobody in the world loves you better, or would do more for thee. Why am I not good enough? There's money in the stocking, Bess, now father is dead—ay! and more than you think—and more to come. There's as good business doing in my yard as in any boat-builder's on the river, not to speak of the smack, which does a tidy stroke, take year and year about. I am not a drunkard, though once a week or so I may take my glass with the rest. I am strong, and I am young. I wouldn't strike a woman nor treat her cruel. I'd be true and faithful. Come, Bess, what is the matter with me, that thou canst not say "Yea"?'

Well would it have been for her, and for another, too, if she could have said 'Yea,' and taken him. Why did she not? He was tall and strong, and handsome of his kind; he was not esteemed to be ill-tempered; he was not at that time a drinker, save of a cheerful glass; he had a good character, save for the reputation of these fishing voyages of his, which did him no hurt with anyone. Did not the Admiral himself put Aaron's Nantz upon his own table? He would have made Bess a good husband, if any could, because such a woman, if she is to be happy, must needs have a strong man for a husband, and one who will rule her and make her respect him. Well, indeed, it would have been for her if she had taken this brave fellow; but she could not.

'Bess,' he said, 'you can't be thinking still upon that midshipman? Why, he was but a boy, and you were a child. He's cast away and dead long ago; and if he was not, he wouldn't remember you.'

But she made no reply.

''Tisn't for love of him, Bess, is it? Why, I fought him half a dozen times; and, if he were to come back, I would fight him again.'

She laughed scornfully. ''Tis true, Aaron, the last fight I saw; and where were you at the end of it? Rubbing your head, and look-

ing ruefully at your broken finger. And where was Jack? Walking away with a laugh. But don't talk to me about Jack. Perhaps he is dead. Living or dead, I don't suppose he would remember or care for a poor girl like me. But I can't marry you, Aaron.'

'You shall,' he said with an oath. 'You shall. I will make you promise to marry me.'

This was a prophecy not made by an oracle. Yet, strange to say, it came true—in a sense. To be sure, it was not the sense that Aaron intended. It has been observed that such prophecies, together with all the prophecies of witches and magicians, when they do come true, never happen in the way hoped for when the prophecy is uttered. Certainly, as you shall see, Aaron's prophecy did turn out true—but the result was not what he had expected and desired. In the same way, Mr. Brinjes' prediction about the South Seas also proved true—yet not in the sense desired and expected by him. As you shall also discover.

'Very well,' said Bess, 'I will promise to marry you, Aaron—when I love you. Can a girl say fairer? Go away now, Aaron; go away and find some other woman who wants to go marrying, and take pity on her, if you can. But as for me, I will marry no man.'

However, he renewed his importunity: offering her presents, which she refused—such as parcels of lace, flasks of Nantz for her father, rolls of silk, and so forth, all got, I doubt not, in the way of his fishing—and always declaring, in his masterful way, that sooner or later she should promise to marry him.

CHAPTER X.

HOW JACK CAME HOME AGAIN.

And now I have to tell how Jack was joyfully restored to us. It was in sorry plight, and after many disasters and sore privations, which killed his companions, but left him—to look upon—none the worse, when he came back to good food and decent clothes again. I think that no one had ever a more wonderful story to tell, and yet there was never a worse hand at telling his adventures. Lucky it was for Ulysses, and for Æneas, that they found poets to sing their sufferings and their wanderings, for, I dare say, the former, at least, would have made a poor hand at telling them himself. A greater than Ulysses was here; and no one, until now, has ever told, save imperfectly, the story of his voyage. It will never be narrated as it ought to be, movingly, and to the life; and the sailing of the 'Countess of Dorset' among the Pacific Islands, and the discoveries which she made, and the dreadful calamities which befell the ship and the crew will no more be remembered than if she had been some poor and insignificant collier, cast away with her crew of half a dozen men and a boy, on the Goodwin Sands.

It is also a strange circumstance that his life should have been saved by the man who, man and boy, was his steady and constant

enemy. Nay, as you will see in the sequel, his life was once more saved by the same hand—a thing which clearly shows the hand of Providence, if it were only designed in mercy as a rebuke to the man who desired and even endeavoured to compass the death of his enemy and rival. Yet I never heard tell that Aaron Fletcher repented of the hatred which he always bore to Jack.

One night in the month of September, and the year seventeen hundred and fifty-six—a dark and cloudy night, the stars hidden and no moon, a light breeze flying, but only in puffs, and hardly enough to fill the canvas, and a soft and soaking rain falling—a small vessel, rigged with fore-sail, sprit-sail, main-sail, and top-sail, was slowly making her way across the German Ocean. Her name was the 'Willing Mind,' of Sheerness; she was manned by a crew of five, two more than are generally taken on board a fishing-craft of her dimensions. Of these men, the skipper sat in the stern, the ropes in his hand, two were lying asleep beside the skipper, covered with a tarpaulin, and two were in the bows keeping watch. She carried no light, but she was sailing well north of the track of outward-bound vessels, and was by this time too close to the Essex coast to fear being run down by colliers. Perhaps the watch was on the look-out for lights on the coast, or for a King's revenue cutter, of which there are many along the east coast, and they greatly molest this kind of craft, overhauling them suspiciously, and searching for brandy and the like, impressing the honest fishermen on board, and sometimes even imprisoning them, haling them before a magistrate, and bringing them to trial; and even, if they show much resistance, hanging them; and by their very appearance always obliging the crew to throw overboard, if they have time, the whole of their cargo. It generally consists of a strange kind of fish, in the shape of kegs, runlets, and jars, with bungs and corks in their mouths. Perhaps the 'Willing Mind' showed no light because the skipper and his crew dreaded being captured by a French privateer, for we were again at war with France, and the Channel was crowded with these hornets, though, as a rule, they hardly ventured north of the Goodwin Sands, or off the Nore.

The boat slipped through the water slowly and silently, save for a gentle ripple in the bows. There was little way on her, but she kept moving.

'I take it,' said the skipper, grumbling, 'that it is already past midnight; we ought to have made Shoeburyness by now. In three hours it will be daylight, and perhaps the dogs upon us—and with such a cargo!'

'The breeze will freshen with the dawn, Master,' said one of the men in the bow.

'And then it may be too late. And we haven't had such a cargo for a twelvemonth. What is that off the starboard bow?'

'It looks like a buoy. But it can't be a buoy!' It was a black object, indistinct as yet, but they were nearing it. Presently, a hoarse cry of 'Sail ahoy!' came across the water. It was repeated twice.

'It is a boat with four men in her,' said the watch, making her out. 'A little dingy she is. Now, what the plague is she doing out here?'

'Sail ahoy!' came across the water again. And now they could distinguish the figures of three or four men standing up in the boat.

The skipper cursed and swore, and put up his helm.

'Sail ahoy! for Jesus' sake! We are sinking!' cried the men.

The skipper cursed and swore again, louder and deeper; but he altered his course, and bore down upon the boat.

There were five men in her, but one of them lay in the stern with his head upon his arms, motionless. The boat had neither oars, mast, nor sails; she was half full of water, and the men were baling her with their hats.

'For God's sake, take us aboard!' they cried. 'It is as much as we can do to keep afloat, and we are starving!'

'Who are you?' asked the skipper.

'We have broke from a French prison,' they told him; 'and four days out, and nothing to eat.'

Still the skipper hesitated.

'Cap'en,' said one of the men, 'we can guess, pretty easy, who you are, and what is your business. That is nothing to us. Take us on board. You shan't regret it. Only take us on board and give us something to eat, and set us ashore on English soil; and if you were laden with all the brandy there is in the world, you should never be sorry for coming to our help.'

The skipper cursed them again for interrupting his run. But it would have been the most shocking inhumanity to refuse; therefore, with a bad grace, and sulkily, he ordered them to get on board as quickly as they could. This they did; but they had to help the man in the stern, because he had got an open wound in his head and had lost much blood, besides being nearly starved. So they lifted him in and laid him on a tarpaulin, and cast off their crazy little boat, and the smack went on her course again.

Then the skipper, who was not wanting in generosity, though he cursed them for stopping him, pulled out of the locker such provisions as might be expected in such a craft—consisting only of bread, mouldy Dutch cheese, and some onions. But, Lord! if these had been the greatest dainties ever set before an Alderman the men could not have devoured the food more greedily; even the wounded man lifting his head and eating ravenously. When there was nothing at all left to be eaten, the skipper passed round a bottle of brandy and a pannikin, which were received with heartfelt gratitude too deep for power of speech. For cold and starving men bread and cheese and onions make a banquet, but brandy in addition—oh! 'twas too much!

When they had eaten up everything, therefore, and drunk as much brandy as their rescuer would give them, they began, as sailors will, through a spokesman, to relate their story. Everybody knows, that at the outbreak of the war the French fleet put so many privateers to sea, and we had so few, that there was nothing but the capture of English merchantmen going up and down the Channel, and the French prisons were soon choked with poor devils laid up by the heels, and waiting for a general exchange, or for the close of the war, to be released. Three of the men had been taken by a privateer out of a West Indiaman, and conveyed with others up the country to a place called St. Omer, which is a fortified town some twenty miles from Dunquerque, and about the same distance from Calais, and were then clapped into prison in the citadel, or the barracks, or the town jail, I know not which. Wherever it was, they found there, among the other prisoners, the man who lay wounded on the tarpaulin, not able to sit up, and saying nothing. And he it was, they said, who had devised the plan of their escape.

There were a dozen more who were in the plot, and should have made the attempt, but at the last moment they lost heart, as always happens in an adventure so desperate, and remained behind. As things turned out, it was lucky that there were no more of them, because there was certainly no room for any more in their rickety little boat.

I do not rightly understand how the escape was effected, because in the subject of fortifications I am ignorant, though Jack hath often endeavoured to explain to me the nature of scarp, counterscarp, bastion, and so forth. However, they surmounted all these difficulties, and in the dead of night they found themselves on the right side of the ramparts—that is, on the outside—and with open country all round them. Then, steering by the stars, they made due north. Before they got half way on their journey they were surprised by dawn, and forced to seek a hiding-place, which they found in a wood or coppice beside a river, where the shelter was good, though the lying was wet and swampy. Here they stayed all day, with nothing to eat except a few berries, then happily ripe. At nightfall they started again, and, as they judged, soon after midnight found themselves on a sandy coast somewhere between Calais and Dunquerque, near a place called Gravelines. But there was no boat on this open and deserted coast, and they wandered up and down for a long time seeking for one, and fearing lest they might again have to seek a night's shelter. When, at last, they found one, it was hauled up high and dry on the sand. This would have mattered little; but, unluckily, her owner, or a man who behaved like her owner, was sleeping on the sand beside her. There was no choice, but they must needs have her, and while they dragged her down to the sea, the Frenchman woke up, and perceiving that he was being robbed of his boat, he lugged out a knife and made at them, and, before he could be fairly knocked on the head, gave their leader a desperate cut across the face, from which he lost a great deal of blood, and was much weakened. They got him safely into the boat, however, though he was fainting from the wound, and so put to sea, and hoped to be able to row across the Channel, if they should have the good luck to 'scape the privateers, and make the port of Dover, in eight or ten hours; or, perhaps, they might be picked up by some English ship, if they were lucky. They had neither mast nor sail in the boat, and there were no provisions in it of any kind. Also, as they quickly discovered, she very soon sprung a leak, and had to be baled out continually. They rowed on, however, taking turns, for three or four hours. Then a most unfortunate thing happened. For, while two of them were rowing lustily, in their eagerness to lose no time, and to get across and land on English soil again, and the oars being not only small but old and rotten, they both snapped short off close to the rowlock, at the same time. This accident dashed all their hopes, for, though they tore up two of the boat's planks, thinking to row with them, it was slow work; then they tried to make a sail with a shirt and one of these

planks, there being a light breeze from the sou'-west, and they got, as they supposed, into the current. They were carried, certainly, as they discovered at daybreak, out of sight of the French coast, but also, which was another misfortune, outside the track of ships, and so, though they saw many sail in the distance, they passed none near enough to be picked up, and in this miserable condition tossed and drifted for four days and four nights, and were now well-nigh spent, and the leak in the boat growing every moment worse, so that she threatened to fill with water and to sink under them unless they baled continually.

'It's easy guessing,' they repeated, after they had told their story, 'what you've got on board: that's no concern of ours. Only you put us ashore. Without making bold to inquire further, tell us where we are, and how far from shore.'

'As to where we are,' said the skipper, 'the night is dark, and I don't rightly know. But to the best of my guessing, we are not far from Shoeburyness, which should lay right ahead; but the shore is low, and difficult to make out.'

'Mate,' said the spokesman, 'land us as far from any port as you can. I guess the press is hot up the river.'

The skipper said that there was a very hot press; that as to himself, he was going to land at Shoeburyness, where he could put them ashore, and they could then shift for themselves, and make their way inland, if so be they had friends anywhere.

'As for this poor fellow,' said the man, pointing to the one who was lying down, 'he say's he's an officer, though he doesn't look like one in those rags of his. So he's got nothing to fear from a press. Don't put him ashore, skipper. Take him to some place where he will get his wound dressed. If what he says is true, he will be able to pay you for the service.'

'I will take him,' said the skipper, 'to Gravesend. That is all I can do for him. After that, he must shift for himself.'

Shortly after this, and before daybreak, they made the land between the village of Southend and Shoeburyness. Here they landed the four men, who, with many vows of gratitude, expressed in sailor-like fashion—namely, with appeals to the Divine Power to blast them and sink them if they ever forgot this service—quickly vanished inland. It matters nothing what became of these poor fellows; but intelligence came from Maldon, shortly afterwards, that a gang of four men, dressed like sailors, had been apprehended stealing a sheep. They made a desperate fight, and one of the posse comitatus was dangerously wounded. In the end, they were overpowered, and taken to Chelmsford Jail, where, in due course, they were all hanged. If these were the men landed from the 'Willing Mind,' the poor wretches had better have remained in their prison at St. Omer, where, at least, they were living a life of innocency, although half-starved with their meagre soup and sour bread. But perhaps the men who were hanged were another gang.

Now, as regards the cargo of the 'Willing Mind'—I mean that

load of fish, all with corks and bungs in their mouths—it would be a shame for me to disclose where it was landed, and by whom it was received, though one may know very well. I am not a spy and an informer; the revenue officers may find out for themselves the secrets of the trade which they have to stop, if they can. I say not whether it is such a trade as a person of tender conscience may undertake; but, at least, this much may be said for it—that those who practise it know beforehand the risks they run, and the punishment which awaits them if they are captured.

Enough to say, that the landing was successful, and that about noon that day the 'Willing Mind,' now in ballast, was running up the Thames with full sail, wind and tide favourable, bound for Gravesend; and the wounded man was so far recovered, that he was now sitting up and looking about him. He was a wild creature to look at, being, to begin with, horribly thin, as if he had had no food for months; he had suffered his beard to grow, and it now covered his whole face, so that he looked like a Turk, with his hair long and uncombed; his head was bound up with a dirty and bloody clout, which hid one eye; there was blood upon his cheek. Presently, while he looked about him with lack-lustre gaze, the pain of his wound being great, his eye fell upon the skipper, and he started and became suddenly alive and alert.

'Aaron Fletcher, by the Lord!' he cried.

'That is my name,' replied the skipper. 'I am not ashamed of it. But I don't know you, mate.'

'You have forgotten me, Aaron. If you had known me, you would have been all the more anxious to save my life. Of that I am well assured. We should have foundered in five minutes. As for me, I cared nothing whether we sank or swam. All is one to a starving man. Give me another tot of brandy, Aaron. Don't you recognise me now?'

'Man! I never clapped eyes on you before to my knowledge. But since you know my name, and therefore, likely, where I live, so that you might do mischief, let me tell you'—here he insisted or emphasised the assurance by a dozen or two of round oaths, such as he and his kind have always ready to hand for all purposes—'that if you are going to turn informer, after all you have seen, it would be better for you if we had thrown you overboard at once with a shot to your heels. One or other of us, my lad, will have your blood.'

The other men of the crew murmured approval of this sentiment with additions of their own invention, about cutting the weasand, breaking bones and limbs, gouging out eyes, and so forth.

'The same old Aaron,' said the man. 'Why, you have not changed, save that you are stouter and bigger. The same sweet and unsuspicious temper. I wonder if there is another such treat in store for us both as we had when last we met?'

'Who the devil are you?' asked Aaron, staring, partly because the man knew him, and because so ragged a fellow should talk with such boldness. But as yet quite unsuspecting.

'That, my friend, if you cannot guess, I shall not tell you. As for your kegs, fear not. I care nothing where they were bestowed nor to whom they were consigned, nor where they came from. So far as I am concerned, you are safe. Besides, you have saved my life. This cut in the head, d'ye see, cost me so much blood that I do not think I could have endured another night of starvation. Why, man, I have had to live for weeks with nothing but a taste now and again, when the chance came, of putrid seal or rotten fish! I'm downright tired of starving.'

'Who are you, then?' Aaron looked at him hard, but could make nothing of him.

Yet it was strange that he did not begin to suspect. This, I take it, was because, like everybody else, he had quite made up his mind that Jack was long since dead, and so he was gone clean out of his mind. This is so, when a man is dead. His face goes out of our mind because we never think to meet him again.

'Well,' he said at length, 'it don't signify a button who you are. You've got nothing against me, even should you lay information. But you're down on your luck, whoever you be. And you've the cut of a sailor about you. Wherefore, mate, take my advice and keep well in shore, for the press is hot all the way from Margate to Chelsea, and, wounded or not, they'll have you if they can, and three dozen or more for skulking, if you are not fit for duty in four-and-twenty hours.'

'Thank you, Aaron,' the man replied, and so lay down again and went to sleep. But Aaron kept looking at him, uneasy, yet not able to remember him.

So they made their way to Gravesend, and arrived off that port in the afternoon.

'I thank you, Aaron,' said the passenger, waking up, and getting to his feet. 'The food and the brandy and the sleep have set me up again. I believe I shall be able to walk the rest of the journey. One more favour, Aaron. After saving my life, it is a small thing for you to do. I am without a single penny. Lend me a shilling, which I will bring myself to the boathouse, and repay you when you come home. You don't know me, Aaron! Why, man, how goes the boat-building?'

Aaron produced the money, still staring with all his eyes, as the children say.

'A shilling, Aaron, is not much. If it was six years ago, I should say we would fight for it.' So he dashed back the hair that hung about his face, and looked Aaron full in the face with a laugh.

'Good Lord!' cried Aaron. 'It's Jack Easterbrook!'

'Mr. Easterbrook, ye dog. I am in rags, but I am a King's officer still, and you are nothing but a common smuggler.'

'It's Mr. Jack Easterbrook,' Aaron repeated. 'He's come back again!'

'As for this shilling, Aaron, shall we fight for it now?'

'But——Oh, Lord! How in the world did you get in such rags as this? And where's the "Countess of Dorset"?'

'As for the rags, where I got them was in the Isle of Chiloe, off the Patagonian coast, and if I had not got them I should have come home as naked as Adam in his innocency. And as for the "Countess of Dorset," her timbers are where I got my rags, on the coast of South America, and her crew are mostly beside her timbers, such parts of them, that is, as the crabs have not been able to devour.'

'Oh, Lord!' Aaron gazed as if at a ghost, and could say no more.

'Do they think me dead, Aaron?'

'All of them; except, I am told, Mr. Brinjes.'

'Oh! and the Admiral?'

'It isn't for the likes of me to know what his honour thinks, sir,' said Aaron. 'But he's been going heavy for a good time past, and they do say as how he frets more than a bit about your drowning.'

Jack was silent for a bit.

'And Bess Westmoreland?' he asked.

'What has she got to think about you for? You are a gentleman, though in rags at this present moment. As for Bess, she is but the daughter of a Penman. She belongs to the likes of us, not to gentlemen officers.'

'She must be grown a big girl now. Well, Aaron, and Mr. Brinjes?'

'He's a devil. He's worse than ever. He gave Lance Pegg, of Anchor Alley, the rheumatics last week, and threatens her with worse for rope's-endin' that girl of hers. He's a devil! and never a day older since your honour went away.'

'So, Aaron, you have saved my life, though you did not intend it. Yet I take it kindly. I do not think you would have suffered your old townsman and your old crony, whom you used to fight whenever you met him, to drown, if you had known who was in the boat.'

'I would not, sir,' said Aaron, stoutly. 'Yet, to tell the truth, I'd as lief you were at the bottom of the sea, in Davy's locker, where we all thought you were, and where you ought to be by rights, your ship and the crew all being there except you.'

'Give me thy hand, Aaron.'

So they shook hands.

'As for the shilling, sir,' said Aaron, 'let me make it a guinea, and if your honour will let me pay for a decent suit of clothes, or shoes, at least——'

'Nay, Aaron. As you found me, so shall they find me. The shilling will be enough to pay for all I want; and I have gone so long barefooted that my feet are as hard as leather, and feel not the road. As for the shilling, we will, perhaps, fight for it. But not yet. You would not, I am sure, being an honourable man, wish me to fight until I have recovered my strength. Farewell, Aaron.'

So he stepped ashore, and with such lightness of step as reminded Aaron of the old days when Jack stepped down the street in his midshipman's uniform, free and careless. He was

light of step because of the joy of returning home, yet he was still somewhat dizzy and weak. However, he had a shilling to pay for supper, and he had but twenty miles to walk, or thereabouts. A short distance for those who are strong and well, but a long journey to be done on foot by a man with an open wound on his forehead, and half-starved to boot, so that it is not surprising that he did not reach Deptford till noon next day.

The next day was Sunday.

At half-past twelve, the Vicar of St. Paul's finished a most learned discourse upon certain philosophical systems of the Phœnicians, the Chaldeans, the Greeks, and the Egyptians, deducing Christian truths, by the method known as analogy, from each. Castilla, I remember, sat with folded hands, and eyes fixed upon the preacher, as if she understood every word. And the Admiral slept. The poorer part of the congregation behaved after their kind; that is to say, the men slept, the women sat perfectly still, and the boys fidgeted. When one became too noisy, he was taken out by the beadle and caned in the churchyard among the tombs, the other boys all listening, and counting the strokes, as if the number administered was in itself a fine moral lesson (the same thing may be observed both in the Army and the Navy). When I read that the Papists attach a particular merit to mere attendance or presence during the performance of their mass, I cannot but think that the same indulgence might be extended to our poor ignorant rustics and servants for their patient attendance at the sermons of which they understand nothing.

When morning service was ended, the Vicar came down from the pulpit and walked into the vestry, preceded by the beadle, carrying his stick of office, and followed by the clerk. Then the people all stood up in respect to the Quality, who led the way out of the church. First there walked down the aisle the Admiral, his wig that morning combed, curled, and powdered, and with him his lady in hoop and satin, and his daughter Castilla in hoop and sarsnet, very beautiful to behold. After them came Mr. Pett, the shipbuilder, with his wife and family; Mr. Underhill, the retired purser, who was a bachelor; Mr. Mostyn, the Cocket-writer of the Customs; Mr. Shelvocke with his family, and others who lived in the genteel houses beside the Bridge; and with them I walked down the aisle, though only a painter, and an apprentice at that. When we had passed down the aisle, and conversed for a few minutes standing on the great stone terrace which makes St. Paul's Church so stately, we separated, some taking the pathway through the churchyard to the right into Church Lane, and others to the left into Bridge Street. I walked beside Castilla, who carried her Book of Common Prayer, and was silent, doubtless meditating on the spiritual truths of the Vicar's sermon. Behind us came three out of the Admiral's four negroes, and Philadelphy, splendid in her red silk handkerchief and a blue speckled frock. And after us came the common sort flocking out together, the boys, for their

part, glad that the sermon was finished, and all of them longing for the Sunday's beef and pudding. The poor do certainly exercise the virtue of patience more than the rich, especially at a sermon, of which, when a learned Divine, like my father, preaches it, they can understand not one word. So that one may forgive them for the unrestrained joy which, on every Sunday, the faces in the side aisles manifest at the conclusion of the discourse, not only of the boys and girls, but of the grown-up people as well. Among those who followed after the better sort were Mr. Westmoreland, the Penman, and his daughter—he bent and feeble, round-shouldered and meek, leaning on his stick; and by his side, Bess, tall and upright as a lance, dressed somewhat finer than those of her condition are wont to go, and holding her head in the air as if she was a Queen. Strange that her father should be so meek and humble, and that no learning of the Catechism could teach Bess meekness or humility. There is, I now understand, a certain quality in beauty which prevents its owner from lowliness, however humble be her station. The young fellows looked after Bess as she came forth from the church; but she regarded them with proud eyes, and passed on disdainful, as if she was too high and good for any of them. Therefore they followed after the other girls, who were as willing as Bess was proud, and perhaps, in these honest fellows' eyes, not much less beautiful.

Just opposite the churchyard gate, close to the principal entrance of Trinity Hospital, we observed, as we passed into Church Lane and turned to the right, a fellow leaning against the posts. He was tall and big-limbed, but thin and wasted, as if he had been suffering from some disease or dreadful privations. One could very well see that he was a sailor, though in his dress, such as it was, there was little to show it. He wore a common sailor's petticoat or slop, he had a ragged waistcoat, buttoned up to the neck, because he had neither shirt nor cravat; he was bareheaded and barefooted; his hair was long and matted; round his forehead was tied a dirty clout or handkerchief, red with streaks of blood, so that he seemed to have but one eye.

As we came out of the churchyard, I caught sight of him, and thought, naturally, how he would look if he were drawn just so, in those rags, and put into a picture, making one of a group. And I saw, but suspected nothing—how could we be all so foolish and blind as not to see, with half an eye, who it was?—how he started when we came forth from the churchyard, and made as if he would move towards us, perhaps to beg, but checked himself, and waited where he was.

But the Admiral stopped, and surveyed him leisurely from head to foot. Then he lugged out his purse, and found a crown-piece, which he bestowed upon the man.

'My lad,' he said, 'thou art a sailor, and thou hast fallen among thieves, belike. I will not ask where thy wound was gotten, nor in what company; nor how thou art in such ragged plight. Take

this crown-piece. Go into dock and refit. When this is spent, come to me for another. And when all is well again, volunteer and serve the King, and so keep out of mischief.'

He shook his gold stick with admonition, and stumped away. But the man took the coin and held it in his hand, without saying a word of thanks. I, still watching him in my foolish way, because so picturesque a rogue had I never seen, most of our ragged vagabonds spoiling their beauty, so to speak, by going in an old wig, torn in half, burned, uncombed, and dirty, that hath, perhaps, been used by a shoeblack to rub the shoes in his trade. There is no picturesqueness possible in an old wig. Yet, I was not so stupid but I saw in the man's eye a look which was both wistful and sorrowful, though I did not then interpret it in that manner.

So the Admiral went on, followed by his good lady, who held her skirts in her hand, and stared at the man in her turn, as ladies sometimes look at such poor wretches—namely, as if they were of a different clay, and had another kind of Adam for their father. But one must not expect a gentlewoman, such as the Admiral's lady (she was by birth distantly connected with the Right Honourable the Earl of Bute, and a Scotswoman) to understand how, beneath the most rugged exterior, there may be found admirable qualities of courage and fidelity. So she gazed upon him, turned her head, and went her way after the Admiral. After her came Castilla. 'Poor man!' she said, in her sweet way, 'I would I had some money to give thee; but I have none. Truly thou art to be pitied. I wish thee better fortune and a ship.'

She had been taught by her father, and fully believed it, that the only place where these rough tarpaulins were happy and out of mischief was on board ship. Seeing that they are so often drunk and fighting, and in trouble on shore, perhaps she was right. But then ashore there is no bo's'n, and there is no cat-o'-nine-tails, save for pickpockets. So she looked at him compassionately, and he moved his lips as if he would have spoken, but did not. And so she passed on her way.

Then came I myself. I said nothing, but he looked at me with a kind of sorrowful wonder. I remembered, directly afterwards, what that eye of his said as plain as it could speak; but at the moment I was deaf to its voice, and blind and stupid, thinking only of a bundle of rags on a tall figure, and how the man and the rags would look in a picture. After ourselves came the negroes and Philadelphy. The men rolled their eyes at this poor fellow with the contempt that a fat and well-fed negro always feels, forgetful of his skin, for a starving white man, and if their master had been out of hearing they would have laughed aloud and even rolled on the ground in the enjoyment of his suffering. Nothing makes a negro laugh more joyfully than to see somebody hurt. That is, perhaps, why some of their kings celebrate their most joyful festivals with horrid murders and rivers of blood. Philadelphy followed her young mistress, and had no eyes for anyone else, being, though

a witch and a sorceress, and an Obeah woman, faithful to Miss Castilla.

When we had passed, the Vicar came out of the vestry and so into Church Lane.

'Why, my friend,' he said, stopping to contemplate the scarecrow, 'where hast thou gotten these rags and this wound?'

'I have escaped, sir, from a French prison, and have received a hurt on the forehead.'

Something in his manner touched the Vicar.

'Are you a common sailor?' he asked.

'Do I look like aught else, sir? Heard one ever of an officer in such rags as mine?'

'Yet you speak like an educated man. And your voice seems familiar to me. Follow me to the vicarage, my poor man, where you shall have a plate of victuals and a tankard of ale, and we will see what can be done to replace some of these rags, which are not proper for a Christian man and an honest man to wear.'

'How doth your Reverence know that I am an honest man?'

'Nay, that I know not, and there are many rogues abroad. But it is not for me—God forbid!—to attempt to separate the sheep from the goats. Therefore, sheep or goat, follow me and be welcome, in the name of our Saviour.'

The Vicar left him, and he turned and would have followed, but for one thing.

We who were a few yards in advance, unthinking and unsuspecting, heard a cry which stopped the very beating of our hearts.

The cry was from Bess Westmoreland.

She, too, saw the ragged sailor when she passed through the churchyard gate. But she did not, like the rest of us, pass on, and think no more. She suddenly broke from her father, pushed the crowd away to right and left, and fell on her knees upon the muddy ground, catching the man by both hands, like a mad thing, and crying:

'Oh, Jack! Jack! Jack! He is home again! Jack Easterbrook has come home again!'

Then, as we crowded round, we saw the tears run down his face. It was the first time, and the last, that ever any man saw Jack weep; yet he had plenty to cry for, both before this and after. He caught the girl by both hands, and bent over her, saying, as we all heard:

'Oh! Bess, Bess, none of them remembered me—not even Luke; none of them thought of me! But you remembered me. Bess! Oh! Bess, you remembered me!'

CHAPTER XI.

THE VOYAGE OF 'THE COUNTESS OF DORSET.'

THEN we all crowded round him, shaking his hand and rejoicing; and the Admiral first swore at Jack for playing a trick upon us (but, alas! it proved to be no trick), and then at himself for his

stupidity, and then could say nothing for the tears which drowned his voice and ran down his cheeks. And Jack declared first that he would never part with the Admiral's crown-piece, and next that he would not put off his rags until he had first eaten the Vicar's plate of victuals and drank his tankard. This he did; and the Vicar said grace solemnly, with thanks for the safe return of the long-lost sailor; and we all flocked round him to see him eat and drink. A pretty sight it was, for he had not tasted honest roast beef for six long years. Then, though it was Sunday, nothing would do but they must ring the church bells, as if they would bring down the tower about their heads. And Mr. Brinjes came running in shirt-sleeves, waistcoat, and night-cap, just as he left his shop, the lancet still in his hand with which he had been bleeding people all the morning.

Thus we carried home our poor ragged prodigal. After the first confusion was over I looked for Bess, but she had slipped away, unheeded.

Then came the barber, and cut off his frightful beard, trimmed and powdered his hair, and tied it behind with black ribbon, so that he looked now like a Christian. More suitable clothes were found for him, and as for his wound, Mr. Brinjes dressed it for him, and covered it with plaister, telling him that it was an ugly gash, but in a few days would be healed, save for the scar across his forehead, a thing which no sailor heeds; and then he stood before us, a proper and handsome fellow indeed. He had left us a lad, and he came back to us a man, over six feet in height, and with broad shoulders and stout legs to match. His cheeks, 'tis true, were somewhat hollow and pale, because he had been on short commons for four years, as you will presently learn.

Now, you will believe that we were eager to know what had befallen him; but we could at first get little talk with him, for all that afternoon there came to the house people of every kind anxious to see and converse with this young hero, who had, it was reported in the town, escaped from the French after six years of captivity. The Church Service in both churches was that afternoon read to empty pews, because all the worshippers were in the Admiral's garden. Among them came the widows of those Deptford men who had sailed with Jack in the 'Countess of Dorset'; many of them had long before this married again, and all were anxious to hear of their late husbands, inquiring particularly into the circumstances of their death, and appearing to find consolation in considering the dreadful nature of their sufferings. There came all Jack's former friends, who had not forgotten him, such as almsmen from Trinity Hospital, and pensioners from Greenwich, old sailors from Deptford and Rotherhithe, and even shipwrights and dockyard carpenters. Mr. Westmoreland came, but without his daughter; and even, though this seems incredible, some of the Thames watermen, who had the grace to remember Jack Easterbrook. All the afternoon Cudjoe and Snowball, who ought to have been at church, trudged

about with foaming tankards and mugs, giving everybody who desired an honest glass to drink the Lieutenant's health (he was still only a midshipman, but they gave him promotion). And there were a thousand questions asked one after the other, so that long before the evening, when we were to have an account of the voyage, we knew pretty well what had happened. And, though it was Sunday, there was brewed a great bowl of punch for the evening; and in the end the Admiral was carried to bed, and many of the guests retired with a rolling gait and thick voice; while, as for me, the next morning showed, by trembling fingers and headache, besides the memory of uncertain steps, that I, too, had rejoiced among the rest beyond the limits of soberness. Among the company were, first, my father, the Vicar of St. Paul's; then Captain Petherick, the commissioner of the King's Yard; Mr. Stephen Pett, who hath a shipbuilding yard of his own, where many fair vessels have been built; Mr. Mostyn, Cocket-writer in His Majesty's Custom House; Lieutenant Hepworth, formerly of General Powlett's Regiment of Marines; Mr. Underhill; Mr. Shelvocke (the younger), who had himself been round the world in the year 1720, as everybody knows who has read the account of his father's voyage, and the malicious book concerning the same voyage written by Mr. Betagh, his Captain of Marines. There was also Mr. Brinjes. And I, for one, presently observed with pride that we had here assembled together in one room—a thing which could hardly be compassed in any other town, except Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Chatham—three men who had at three separate times sailed upon the great unknown Pacific; and of these, two had actually circumnavigated the globe.

I have observed, having been born and brought up among men who delight in telling and hearing stories of battle, escapes, shipwreck, and the like, that the hero of a hundred adventures is seldom as ready to tell them as he who hath in all his life experienced but one; and that, often enough, not of his own seeking, but against his own desire, and even entered upon in bodily fear. Yet Virgil makes Æneas relate his wanderings movingly and in the finest verse; and Shakespeare tells how Othello would, in the hearing of Desdemona, fight his battles over again. As for Jack, he had encountered so many perils and met with so many adventures, and those of so extraordinary a kind, that one would not expect the hundredth part of them to be told in one evening. They were enough to fill a dozen books of travel, such as are generally written, most of them with no adventures more terrible than the upsetting of a coach or the appearance of a footpad; nay, I have never seen any books which contained such wonders as Jack had witnessed, if we except the voyages of Captain Clipperton, Captain Shelvocke, and Commodore Anson; and none of these commanders ever sailed among the islands which the 'Countess of Dorset' visited. Yet he was not able, at first, to tell us much about them; and it was only by continual questioning and persuading him to talk, with the map lying open before him, that we could get him to

unburden his mind of some of the things he had seen and undergone. Some men—of whom Jack was one—are so constituted that they do not seem to understand what people want to know, or what they should tell them. Our hero was not reticent, I am sure, from any fear of appearing boastful, because sailors love above all things to speak of their own adventures; but because, first, he felt, on this the first day of his return, new and strange to us, after six years of absence; and next, he was never good at narrating, save stories of fight; and, further, it is not easy for anyone to gather up immediately, and at short notice, all the recollections of the past six years. When a man has been two years with savages, or two years in a Spanish or French prison, he is apt to forget some of the things which happened before, even though they passed among the unknown islands of the Pacific Ocean.

'As for her course, now,' he began, doubtfully. He had before him the map of the world, on Mercator's projection, by John Senex. It was my father's copy, and although the map is not on so large a scale as a ship's chart, yet it was big enough to serve. Deptford is too insignificant to be marked, and Jack's finger, when he would indicate the ship's starting-point, covered the whole of Kent, Middlesex, Essex, and Surrey. 'As for her course, now,' he repeated, looking at the map doubtfully, considering how best to begin. Perhaps he had forgotten how to use a map, since he had not seen one for four years. Castilla was standing on one side, looking over his shoulder, I at the other side. The Admiral sat opposite, his red face filled with benevolence and affection. Surely, there never was a kindlier face in the world. Behind him and beside the fireplace was his lady, not carried away so greatly by the general emotion, partly because she never entertained the same love for Jack that filled her husband's breast, and partly because, like most women, she was not in the least degree interested in foreign lands and savage races, and partly because she knew not the bottom of a map from the top. The gentlemen sat round the table as they chose, and at the sideboard the two negroes had charge of the smoking bowl. I love negroes for one thing: that is, for their fellow-feeling when any occasion for rejoicing and feasting arises. They would like the whole of their lives to be spent in feasting, drinking, and laughing. For instance, I do not suppose that these two rascals had given one single thought to Jack during the whole of his six years' absence, yet here they were, their mouths broad grinning, their faces shining, their eyes twinkling and dancing, moving nimbly about with the glasses, taking care, with the greatest zeal, that the Admiral's was kept always full, and that none of the gentlemen should be allowed so much as to glance inquiringly in the direction of the bowl. Had it been the return of their own son they could not have shown a livelier joy. N.B.—Later in the evening, when the Admiral was in bed and the guests gone, they finished the bowl themselves; and had it not been for Jack, who in the morning was so good as to pump upon them, they certainly would have incurred the wrath of the Admiral, for they

were even at eight o'clock in the morning, and after a night's sleep, still more than half-seas over.

'Oh, Jack,' said Castilla, 'to think that you should remember her course after all these years!'

'Easy a bit, my lad,' said the Admiral. 'Take another glass before we begin. Gentlemen, fill up. Fill up the gentlemen's glasses, ye black rogues! This is a joyful evening—an evening out of ten thousand. And to think that none of us knew him except Bess, the Penman's girl! Castilla, my dear, where were your eyes?'

'Indeed, Sir, I was thinking of the Vicar's discourse. Else, I am sure I should have known Jack.'

'And where were yours, Luke, and where were mine—to treat him like a ragamuffin tarpaulin? Well, well! Fill up Mr. Jack's glass, Snowball. Drink, my lad; Castilla loves a sailor who can take his whack. Drink her health as I drink thine, dear lad.'

Castilla laughed. She loved soberness and temperance; but Jack did not come home every day.

'As for her course, now,' said the Admiral.

'We sailed from Deptford ——'

'You did, my boy, and I well remember the day, six years ago, when the "Countess of Dorset" dipped her ensign and fired her salute. The boy tells me, gentlemen, that for four years he has never tasted punch—poor lad; nor quaffed a tankard of ale—think of it; nor sat down to a comfortable pipe of tobacco; nor known the comforts of a hammock in a seaworthy and weather-tight vessel. For four years! Your Reverence, it is Sunday evening; but, with respect to the cloth,' the Admiral turned his face, rosy and beaming as the setting sun, to my father, 'when the prodigal son came home did his father ask the Chaplain, who, I suppose, was a Levite, whether it was the Sabbath Day, before he ordered the fatted calf to be killed and roasted?'

'We do not learn that he did so,' replied my father. 'Though doubtless——'

'Then, Sir, suffer us to believe, for our satisfaction at the present juncture, that the event, like another one of later occurrence, happened on the Sabbath Day. Then have we authority of Holy Writ for making merry on the Sabbath Day.'

At this display of wit they all laughed without rebuke from the Vicar.

'Go on, Jack; go on, my lad. I must still be talking, when it is Jack we want to hear. Your health, my lad, your health. I never thought to see thy honest phiz again. Thy hand again, Jack. This is a joyful evening, gentlemen. Damme, I say again a joyful evening.' Yet the tears stood in his eyes.

We were all moved, and the Admiral more than any. But Mr. Brinjes sat in his place, his one eye, like a ball of fire, fixed on Jack. I knew that he was recalling his own voyage in the Southern Seas, and thinking of his treasure. It was as if some scent or fragrance of the islands which he loved to talk about was clinging to Jack.

Then our returned prodigal went on with his narrative, and if the interruptions of the Admiral are not set down, with his ejaculations and oaths, it is because, were everything to be told, no history would ever come to an end. Wherefore they are omitted; nor have I tried to set down all that Jack said, nor a tenth part, on this evening, because half the time he was answering questions from Mr. Shelvocke, who must needs show his knowledge of those seas, and from Mr. Brinjes, who had also sailed upon them, and from Captain Petherick, who was a great lover of geography. I have also ventured to omit that part of his narrative which related to the behaviour of the crew, the sailing qualities of the ship, and those matters generally which concern sailors, and which would only be understood by them. 'We sailed, as you remember, Admiral, carrying with us twenty-five guns, with a crew of 120 men all told, and provisions for twenty-four months. Gentlemen, with submission, I venture to remark that no navy provision exists which will last twenty-four months, for the biscuit becomes weevilly, and the pork and beef rancid; and as to the cheese and the salt butter—but there!——'

'He is right,' said Mr. Underhill.

'We were fortunate, however, and fell in, before we suffered much from this cause, with provisions of another kind. The last land that we saw was the Start, and the next was Cape Finisterre. We then stood away for the island of Teneriffe, where we designed to take in wine, rum, and brandy, the Captain being of opinion that to keep a merry heart in the crew—which is, above all things, desirable on a long voyage—a double ration is often necessary; wherefore, we laid in at the town of Santa Cruz a great store of malmsey, canary, and verdina, which is a greenish-coloured wine and strong bodied, but keeps well in hot climates.

'After leaving Teneriffe, we were becalmed for three weeks, during which, I remember, we caught two very fine sharks, off which the men regaled. Then we touched at St. Helena. After this we were driven off our course by the trade-wind, and sighted Tristan d'Acunha; we put in at the Cape, and, after leaving Algoa Bay, we steered nor'-nor'-east, passing the southern point of Madagascar, where we expected to meet with pirates.'

'I fear they are all dead,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'Their settlement was on the north-east coast, which is not so full of fever as the south-west. Dead now, they must be, every man. And I doubt if their children, darkies all, would have the spirit to carry on the business.'

'Our course was now to the coast of New Holland, the object of the voyage being, as the Captain told us, to discover new lands, and, if possible, countries where British settlements might rival those of Spain in the Manillas and the Ladrones.'

'You did not visit the Manillas, then?' said Mr. Shelvocke. 'There is nothing in those seas which can surpass the Manillas in beauty and fertility.'

'The Pope,' said my father, 'pretended, in his pride, to confer upon the Spaniards all the lands beyond the Atlantic, including, I suppose, Magellanica or the Pacific Ocean, which was not then discovered.'

'We had bad weather crossing this great ocean, whereon we sailed for two months, or thereabout, with never a sight of land. Then we began to find seaweed, with cuttle bones and bonitos, and after two or three days we sighted land; but finding nothing except rocks and foul ground, we stood off again.' His finger was now on the coast of the great unknown southern island called New Holland. 'On the third or fourth day we found an opening in the land, and anchored in two fathoms and a half of water. We called the place Shark's Bay, and we stayed here a week. The shore is shelving to the sea, and we saw there a kind of animal like the West Indian maccaroon, save that it has long hind legs on which it jumps; and I think it was there that we found an ugly kind of guana which stinks. The natives were naked black men, some of them painted with a kind of pigment, and their hair frizzled. They seem to live on shell-fish, and carry lances with heads of flint.'

'I had hoped,' said my father, 'to hear of some polite and civilised nation with arts and sciences, and traditions of the patriarchal religion, and of gentle manners.'

'Their manners' Jack continued, 'are beastly, and their ways are treacherous; and as for religion, we saw no sign of any. How can savages have any religion who live on mussels? I have lived on them myself, and felt no promptings of religion all the time, but only discontent and swearing. Well, gentlemen, we continued our voyage, and I daresay we carried the coast line a good bit farther than this map shows; but my memory serves me not on this point, and my own as well as the ship's log was lost when the ship was cast away.'

'Our course,' said Mr. Shelvocke, 'was north of these latitudes. Wherefore, I have never visited the shores of New Holland. This I regret the less, having seen the Manillas.'

'When we reached the most southerly point, which, I dare say, may be somewhere near to this place on the map, the Captain called together his Lieutenants, the Master and the Captain of Marines, and, over a cheerful glass, opened his mind to them, as we presently heard in the gun-room. He said that his orders were general, and that it was reported by those who had sailed on those seas, particularly by those who thought it no sin to hoist the Jolly Roger——'

'It is not,' said Mr. Brinjes, stoutly, 'provided that it is in Spanish waters only. I have myself sailed under the crossbones and skull. Sin? Why, it is a commendable action to maul and harass the Spaniards.'

'The Captain said that it was reported,' Jack continued, 'that there are islands in those seas of incredible wealth, compared with which Mr. Shelvocke's Manillas are poor; but that the Spaniards either endeavour to keep the secret of these islands to themselves, or they have not the curiosity to seek them out. His design was, therefore, to seek for these islands, even though we might have to fight the Spaniards should we meet them; and if any place should be found to possess the wealth they are supposed to contain, then, Spaniard or no Spaniard, to plant the flag of Great Britain upon them; and, if Heaven should prosper our enterprise, presently to return by the Straits of Magellan.

'So we steered a course north-west by north, across an open sea, with fair winds, sighting no land at all until we were in latitude 20° south, or thereabout, when we came to a great island; indeed, if it be not a part of the great Southern Continent. Gentlemen——'

Jack broke off here. 'I cannot tell you all, nor a tenth part, of what we saw in these seas. There are thousands of islands, all much finer than you can imagine.'

'They are—they are,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'I have seen them myself.'

'Our own course,' said Mr. Shelvocke, jealously, 'was in the northern latitude, the islands of which are incomparable.'

'And of what kind are the people?'

'For the most part we found them gentle and generous. No travellers have ever visited these islands that we could learn; they

know nothing of the Spaniards; they are black, and go naked, and they can all swim like fishes.'

'They can,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'especially the young women.'

'Of what kind is their religion?' asked the Vicar.

'I think, Sir, that they have none'—Mr. Brinjes shook his head—'at least, we saw no signs of any, though, of course, we could not talk to them in their own language. The islands are so close together that it is impossible to sail more than a day or two without coming in sight of a new archipelago; some there are which we judged as big as Ireland, perhaps, and others not more than half an acre; some there are which are only coral reefs lying in a circle round smooth water, no bigger than some of the West Indian Keys; and some there are which are covered with great mountains and volcanoes.'

'It is true—it is quite true,' said Mr. Brinjes.

'And as for the riches of them?' asked one of the company.

'I know not if there be any. We made such signs as we thought would make them understand that we wanted gold and precious stones; but they produced none, and we believed that they have no knowledge of gold, even if there be gold in their mountains. Of pearls there must needs be plenty, seeing that there are oysters in abundance. But we saw none.'

'No gold and no jewels!' said my father. 'Happy islanders!'

'And they seem to have all things in common.'

'Wherefore the main temptations to sin,' said my father, 'are removed. Where there is no private property there can be no robbery, no envying, no jealousies, no overreaching. Oh, thrice happy people, if they knew their own happiness!'

'If we had not lost the log,' Jack continued, 'we should have covered these seas with islands never before seen, even by Dampier, Magellan, Drake, or Rogers. Now, no one knows where they are, and I alone of all living men, unless it be Mr. Brinjes, have seen them. As for our gallant company'—here he paused and looked around him solemnly. I have noticed many sailors do the same thing; it is as if they were counting those present to be sure that they, too, are not shipwrecked men—'they are all dead by now, I doubt not. Unless some escaped, of whom I know nothing, who may be living yet among the Indians.'

'Fill his glass,' said the Admiral. 'Gentlemen, let us drink to the memory of these poor fellows, cast away, and now dead.'

'There is no such sailing,' Jack continued, 'anywhere in the world——'

'There is not,' Mr. Brinjes interrupted.

'Save for the constant temptation for the men to desert, and live in indolence among these people. Better would it have been, save for one who now sits here among you all, had the whole ship's company gone ashore and stayed there, to live in the warm air and sunshine of that climate.'

'Better to die a Christian than live a heathen,' said the Vicar.

'Well, we had the Church Service read every Sunday morning,'

said Jack, 'which was no doubt a comfortable thing for the poor fellows to think upon when the rocks were cracking their skulls like eggshells. But as for the sailing, so long as we were among the islands, it was like cruising upon a pond, with fresh fruit, and fish of all kinds, and wild birds in plenty to be shot. Sir'—he addressed the Vicar—'this place is surely the Garden of Eden, though there is in Scripture no mention made of any seas. Of this, the Captain, who was a sober and religious man, was well assured.'

'The site of the garden,' said my father, 'hath been placed in Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and Euphrates, or in Arabia Felix, or at the foot of the Caucasus, or near Damascus, but never, that I know of, in Magellanica or Oceanus Australis. And I know not how it could be there, unless the Euphrates and the Nile have greatly changed their course.'

'It cannot be anything else but the Garden of Eden,' said Jack; 'though, perhaps, in the Deluge much of it was swallowed up, and only the tops of the mountains left above water.'

'Should we ever,' said the Vicar, 'find that garden, which doubtless exists somewhere upon the earth—nay, some have pretended to have seen it—we shall also find the gate, and at the gate the angel with a flaming sword turning in every direction to keep the way of the Tree of Life. But it may very well be that, when the curse of labour was imposed upon man for the sin of Adam—in consequence of which some parts of the world were afflicted with aridity and sand, other parts were covered with ice and snow, others, again, became marshes, and others became hard and unprofitable for the toilers—that some parts were left by merciful design in their virginal and pristine beauty, just as they left the hand of the Creator at the dawn of the first Sabbath, being reserved for this generation to discover, so that faith might be strengthened, and true religion revived in the world, by so striking a proof of the Divine Narrative. But let us go on, for the hour groweth late.'

'Alas! gentlemen, there is very little more to tell, and the rest of the history of the ill-fated "Countess of Dorset" is all misfortune. We came, at length, to an end of these islands, which we parted with to our great regret; and so, with open sea, steering now east or south-east, with design to make Juan Fernandez or the Island of Masafuera. When we were within thirty or forty leagues, according to our reckoning, of these islands, there fell upon us a dreadful gale, or succession of gales, which lasted a week or more, so far as I remember, the ship driving before the wind under bare poles. Then we lost our foremast, and presently both mainmast and mizenmast went by the board; and for great waves and the force of the wind, I never experienced the like. We rigged a jury-mast with difficulty, and a fore-sail to steady her head. By this time our bulwarks were broken, and our boats stove in, so that there was very little hope left us, except that the gale might abate, in which case we might keep her afloat—for now she had sprung a leak, and the men were kept day and night to the pump—until we

could make some kind of raft. As for our guns, we heaved them overboard, with everything else that would lighten the ship. Gentlemen, the gale did not abate; on the contrary, it blew harder, if that were possible; and I think everybody on board had given up hope. As for the men, some of them did their duty to the last: but some of them became mutinous, and wanted to get to the spirit store, and go down happy. Which is, I take it, a fool's way of dying.'

'It is,' said the Vicar.

'I have seen them die that way,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'Some men have even walked the plank, after drinking a pint or so of rum, dancing and laughing, and with the end of a song on their lips. But, no doubt, 'tis better to go down sober. Besides, there is always some hope for a sober man, but none for a drunken one.'

'I do not know, gentlemen, how long this lasted. We unshipped our rudder, I remember, which finished our misfortunes, for now the ship lay like a log in the trough of waves, which rolled her about as they pleased. And how many were washed overboard I know not; nor how many were left in the ship when at last she struck the rocks, and was beaten to pieces. I would rather face a dozen broadsides than wait again, for a week or more, with Death almost certain at the end of it. To judge from the haggard faces of those who waited with me, and to remember my own mind—why, we died a hundred deaths in the mere apprehension and waiting for it. Most of us died in earnest before long. For one morning, when the daylight came, we saw before us a most dreadful sight—namely, the coast of Patagonia, which is the most inhospitable, I suppose, in the whole world, and the most terrible, by reason of its rocks and precipices. We were driving right upon the coast. Then, indeed, we gave ourselves up for lost. When we struck, the sea lifted her and beat her against the rocks, breaking and grinding her timbers as if she had been nothing bigger than a Portsmouth wherry; and the waves broke over her at the same time, washing the men from the places where they were clinging. As for me, I was carried off, and what happened to me afterwards I know not, save that I lost consciousness, and when I recovered I found myself lying on a ledge of rock, but how I get there, whether carried thither by some great wave or upon some piece of wreck, I know not. The first thing I did was to make sure that I had no bones broken. I was not indeed hurt in any way, save that from head to foot I was covered with bruises, which were of small account. And then I turned to look at the wreck. We were surely landed in the worst place in the world; it was a narrow creek or bay between high cliffs, into which the sea rushed with violence inexpressible. Already the ship was broken up save for the after part, where there were still clinging two or three poor wretches; below my feet in the boiling water, grinding against each other, were pieces of wreck, and, most terrible to see, there were mangled bodies of our poor fellows, dashed against the rocks and among the broken timbers. It is wonderful to think that any of us escaped.

'At first I thought that I was alone, the only man saved. But

there were others, and I found that most of them, like myself, could not tell how they had got ashore, and why they were not, like their shipmates, dashed to pieces. There were fourteen of us in number, and no more came ashore; wherefore, seeing the violence of the waves and the impossibility of swimming in such a sea, we concluded that the rest were all drowned. When the wind abated, which was the next day, we managed to get up to the rocks some of the timber and wreck washed ashore, and made some kind of shelter; but we could not light a fire, and it was now the winter season in these latitudes, and cold. There were one or two casks of provisions which reached the shore unbroken and not touched by the sea; we lived upon them while they lasted, our drink being rain-water, of which there was plenty. When this supply ceased we had nothing to subsist upon at all but shell-fish, of which there were at first great quantities, but we presently exhausted them, and then we had to leave our hut, such as it was, and to move on along the coast in order to find more. We were all the time as men in a dream, not knowing where we were nor what to do; all day we gazed stupidly at each other, and all night we crouched together for warmth. But when the time came that we must leave our rocks we began to take counsel. My companions were common sailors, rude and ignorant fellows; and as for me, I knew nothing except that I was certain that we must be somewhere upon the western shore of South America, that part of it which is called Patagonia. Now, if we marched south, we should in time come to the Straits of Magellan, through which there might pass some ship; but how long we should wait, or how great the distance might be, we knew nothing. And every day's march would bring us into colder and more desolate regions. On the other hand, if we marched north, we might, in the long run, reach the Spanish settlements, which are reported to stretch southward very far. But, again, should we reach them, it was most likely that they would murder us, or hand us over to the Inquisition to be burned alive for heretics. However, we decided in the end to march north, which we did, leaving behind four of our number who had died, partly of cold and partly of flux, brought on by the shell-fish diet, which afflicted us all in various ways. As for myself, it covered my whole body with an intolerable itching, which flew from one part to another, so that I got no rest day or night.'

'It is a prurigo,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'There is no cure for it but a change of diet.'

'We were by this time in as miserable a plight as ever befell shipwrecked sailors, for the weather was continually wet and cold; as for our clothes, they were rags, wet through day and night; we were pinched with hunger; we had not a shoe to our feet; there was not a single tool or weapon, not even a knife among us. A man, gentlemen, without tools is in sorry case. So we began our way along the coast, which we durst not leave, partly for fear of wild beasts and natives, and partly because while we kept near the

sea we should not starve. We wandered in this way, seeking such shelter as we could find, and always wet, cold and half-starved for a month or two—I know not how long. But one day we fell in with a tribe of Indians. By this time, I remember, there were only eight of us left. These men came to meet us, brandishing spears and threatening to kill us; while we, for our part, had nothing to do except to make signs showing how helpless and harmless we were. So they took us with them: and I think I never spent a happier evening than the first, when we lay upon the ground about a great fire, with broiled fish to eat and sealskin to cover us. We had not been warm or dry for a matter of three months. As for living with them, we soon got tired of that life, except two of our company, who took Indian wives, and resolved to continue among them. For, like us, they lived by the seashore, having no knowledge of any agriculture, and devoured fish and mussels, oysters, and so forth, all of which were collected for them by their wives. I have never seen any more dexterous than these poor women in diving and catching fish, which they would drive, by frightening, into some small creek or inlet of the sea, whence they could not escape and were easily captured. They also collected and ate certain berries, which were nauseous at first, but which we presently grew to consider as useful against the disorders caused by a fish diet. But as for the dirt and the vermin, and the savage nature of the life we led, I cannot so much as speak of these things. Sometimes when, by reason of storm and gales, fish was scarce, we were driven to live on the flesh of seals, and that putrid and stinking. And because we depended so much upon the mussels and oysters, we were obliged continually to shift our quarters, and slowly drew more and more northwards, until at last we arrived at the most southerly of the Spanish settlements, which consisted of nothing else than a kind of convent and a church with four priests. For my own part, I approached the place with terror, thinking that the stake would be set up, and the flames would be consuming us as soon as the priests should understand that we were Englishmen and Protestants. Well, gentlemen, they never so much as asked us of what religion we were. But these good priests—your Reverence will forgive me——'

'There are charitable hearts in every country and in every religion,' said the Vicar. 'Why not in Magellanica?'

'They gave us clothes to put on; they washed and dressed our wounds, because by this time we were covered all over with sores and bad places. They gave us good food and wine to drink, and they heard our story—one of them could speak English—with tears and pity. They told us that we must be sent to the nearest Spanish port as prisoners; but bade us be of good courage, because we should be treated well.'

'In these remote parts,' said the Vicar, 'the Pope and the Inquisition being so far off, there is room for the growth of human feelings, even with priests.'

'After six months of living among them—a better and a more charitable brotherhood I never hope to meet—there came an opportunity of conveying us to the island of Chiloe, where there is a Spanish Governor. Now, I reckon that the ship was cast away two years and a half after we sailed, it being then midwinter, which, on the coast of Patagonia, is in the month of July; and I think that we lived with the Indians for the space of two years—it was time enough to wear out all that were left of our rags, so that we went into the convent with nothing but sealskin over our shoulders, tied round the waist with a thong of sealskin leather. We stayed at Chiloe, where we were treated more hardly than with the priests, yet not cruelly, for three or four months, when the Governor was able to send us on to the port of Callao.'

'He is now,' said the Admiral, 'prisoner of the Spanish, and within reach of the Bloody Inquisition. Snowball, fill up Mr. Easterbrook's glass. Keep it full, ye lubber! at such a time he needs all the punch he can swallow.'

'Out of the whole ship's company, there remained now but six. They put us in prison, but they gave us wine and food, chiefly beans, bread, and onions, as good as they had themselves, and sometimes chocolate. Presently there came a priest, and began to talk about our heretical condition, and the dangers we ran should we continue in obstinacy. This made us mighty uneasy, as you may imagine; because the Inquisition—the Holy Inquisition, as they call it—is established at Lima, whither, the Padre informed us, we should shortly be taken. It seemed likely that we had only escaped drowning to suffer the rack and the stake. I hope, gentlemen, that I should have done my duty even to the end, had there been no escape. Meantime, I cast about how to get out of their clutches. We had a good deal of liberty within the prison, and many visitors came there bringing cigarettos, which are rolls of paper containing tobacco, to the prisoners, who were mostly half-caste, in prison for stabbing, or sailors for mutiny, the authorities caring little how their prisoners pass the time so long as they are kept in limbo. In this way, I made the acquaintance of an honest Frenchman, captain of a trading brig, who, I found, hated the priests and all their works and took pity on me, seeing that I must either become a convert or look to be burned. He, therefore, brought me a disguise, and conveyed me safely out of prison on board his own ship, where I remained stowed away in the hold until he sailed out of harbour. As for the other men, three of them recanted their errors, as they called it, and walked in the procession at an Auto da Fé at Lima, where the other poor fellows, who stuck by their guns, were burned alive.'

''Tis a damnable nation,' said Mr. Brinjes.

'Say rather,' said the Vicar, 'that it is a nation under the curse of a gloomy superstition, which prompts them to commit these cruelties.'

'As for me, I worked before the mast, and found the French

sailors, when I could talk their lingo, an honest set of fellows. But when we got to Brest, we learned that war had broken out; and so I was a prisoner again, and marched as a common sailor, with others in the same plight, from one strong place to another, till we came to St. Omer.'

CHAPTER XII.

HOW JACK THANKED BESS.

EARLY in the evening when the common sort had all gone away, well filled with the Admiral's best October, and before the gentlemen arrived, Jack left us, and stole quite unnoticed from the house. As he left us, so he returned, no one having observed that he had been absent for a moment. Yet we were all of us talking and thinking of no one else, and believed that he was still among us. So, in a play at the theatre, when the mind is fully charged and occupied with the hero, so that one

can think of nothing but his adventures, we do not perceive that he is no longer on the stage before our eyes, and, when he presently returns, we do not remember that he has ever been out of our sight, and all that has passed seems to have been done in his presence.

But why Jack left us and whither he went, I have since been told, and that, as one may say, on credible authority—namely, by the only person who knows.

In short, he left us to go in search of Bess, his heart being, already, inflamed by the thought of her beauty, and fired with gratitude because, of all his old friends, she alone recognised him. Ulysses was recognised by none but his dog. Why, Jack would have been less than human, a mere senseless log, had he not been moved by this circumstance. And so far from senseless his was a heart as easily inflamed as touchwood.

Bess was sitting on the floor before the fire, her father being somewhere abroad, I suppose, in conversation with his friends and cronies, the sexton and the barber. It was Sunday evening, therefore she had no knitting or work of other kind in her hands. She could not read, and therefore she had not taken one of her father's books; and she was alone, therefore she was not talking. Outside, the night had already fallen, but she was not one of those who waste good money by burning candle and fire at the same time, unless for the sake of work. The red firelight played upon her cheeks, and made them glow; and upon her eyes, and made them red balls; and upon the walls of the room, which were covered with specimens of the Penman's art, pasted on the wainscot; and on the sideboard, where stood the candlesticks of brass and the snuffers, polished and bright; with the house pewter, which shone like silver, so good a housewife was this girl. Her hands lay folded in her lap, and she was leaning forwards as if reading faces in the red coals, as children sometimes love to play. I think she saw one face only, and that a strange wild face, with matted hair and long beard, and a bloody clout across the forehead. As to her thoughts —who can read the thoughts that crowd into the head of a young girl? I would not dare to say that up to that time Bess was in love with her old playfellow; yet it is certain, because Mr. Brinjes spoke so much of him, that he often occupied her mind. Nor was it, I venture to say, all on Jack's account that she would listen to none of Aaron Fletcher's advances. Yet she must have been hard-hearted, indeed, had this home-coming failed to move her soul. I have sometimes thought that if at this time Jack had made no advances to her, she must presently have taken Aaron and thought no more of her old playfellow, save as of a gallant gentleman belonging to a class above her. No man can speak positively of a woman's mind; but I am assured that it is seldom in the nature of a woman to love any man—though she may greatly admire him—until he hath first shown and proved by words and looks that he thinks of her and loves her. Therefore, if Jack had made no

advances——however, it is idle to talk of advances: such a man as Jack doth not make advances: they are for cooler and more cautious men; he lands, charges, and carries by storm the fortress which expected to be besieged by well-known rules.

Now, as she sat there watching the coals glowing in the fire, Bess suddenly started and her heart ceased to beat, for at the door she heard a step. She remembered that step after six long years; and the latch was lifted, and Jack himself came in—a thing she had not so much as ventured to hope, though she expected that he might in a day or two call to see her father, if he should still remember his former instructor.

She sprang to her feet, half-afraid, yet rejoicing.

'Bess!' he cried hoarsely. 'You had not forgotten me?'

He was dressed now, shaven, and washed; a tall and handsome man, though pale and somewhat hollow in the cheek.

'Bess!' he repeated, holding out both hands, 'have you nothing to say to me?'

'Oh, Jack!' she whispered timidly. But now she was trembling, and really afraid of him, because there was a look in his eyes which frightened her; a strange look it is, which painters, for the most part, have failed to catch; it is one which makes the eyes soft and glowing; it is the look of love and longing. Bess had never seen that look, and it frightened her.

'Jack,' she said, 'shall I go and look for father?'

'Oh!' he answered, 'you knew me, Bess!' His voice was husky. 'All the rest had forgotten me; but you knew me. Look for your father? Not yet, Bess! Not yet! Oh, Bess!' He said no more, but caught her hands, drew her towards him, and kissed her a thousand times.

Then, in a moment, all her love went out to him. She gave him all her heart. Thenceforward she was no longer afraid of him; yet she was his servant and his slave, though he called her mistress.

'My dear,' he said presently, 'let me look at my sweetheart. Nay, the firelight will do to light those eyes; no need of a candle. Oh, the sweet face! And what a tall girl she is! Is it the firelight or her cheeks, or is she blushing because her lover hath kissed her? And oh, the rosy lips! Kiss me, Bess. Kiss me, and tell me that you love me. My dear, I had forgotten no one at home—no one; but until you caught my hands to-day, I did not know how much I loved you. And now, tell me, pretty, hast thou sometimes thought of Jack?'

'Oh, yes,' she told him. 'I have never forgotten, never; and I knew you were not drowned, whatever they said, and Mr. Brinjes alway declared that some day you would come home again. Often and often have I gone to Philadelphy and inquired of her concerning a young sailor—meaning you, Jack—but I did not tell her who it was, and always her reply was that he was safe, and would come home again, though to be sure, she said, there were dangers in the

way. She is a proper witch, and knows. But, oh! Jack, go away; this is foolishness; you must not kiss me any more, because you are a gentleman, and I am only a simple girl, and the daughter of a plain man. You must not talk of love to me; you must not think of me, Jack. I know you would not laugh at me, and mock me; but you must not think of me, Jack. Why, there are fine ladies in plenty who would die for love of you!'

'And could you die for love of me, Bess? Oh! how could I live so long without thee?'

'Oh, Jack!' she murmured, laying her head upon his shoulder, 'I would rather die of love for you than live for the love of someone else! and oh! if you left off loving me I should sit down and pray to die at once.'

He kissed her again—I know not how many times he kissed her—telling her, which was quite true, because his thoughts ran not that way, that he cared not a fig for all the fine ladies in London town, with their nimby-namby, piminy ways, and their hoops and paint; but he loved an honest girl with roses of her own in her cheeks, who would love him in return. And so their pretty love-talk went on, with thee and thou, and kisses sweet as honey to this girl, who knew not how or why she should conceal her joy and her love.

'I never knew,' Bess told me afterwards, 'no, I never knew what happiness could be until I sat that evening with my sweetheart's arms round my waist, and my face upon his shoulder, so that he could kiss me as often as he pleased and whisper that he loved me. Oh, why—why should he love me; he so handsome and so splendid, and I so simple a maid? What are a girl's good looks compared with a man's? And how should he be able to love one who is not a gentlewoman—he who might, had he chosen, have married a countess?'

When he left her, which was all too soon, because the Admiral would be expecting him, the girl fell upon her knees and prayed. This was a thing (she confessed it to me herself) which she had never done before in her life, except in church, and according to the Forms contained in the Book of Common Prayer. If one may venture so to speak of a Book which hath engaged the thoughts and labours of learned and pious men since the foundation of the Church—I mean the Book of Common Prayer—there is one unfortunate omission in its forms: it provides, that is to say, for all the other great events in life—namely, Birth, Baptism, Marriage, the Arrival of Children, Sickness, and Death; but there is no Form of Prayer for the Betrothal of a man and a maid. Yet there are many appropriate Lessons that might be taken for it from the Old and New Testament; and there are many grateful and joyful Psalms; and there are love-sick verses—better, surely, were never written—especially in the Song of Solomon; and, without doubt, if ever there were occasion for prayer and praise, it is when a pair of lovers promise in private what they will presently promise in the

sight of the congregation. Bess, poor child, knew no prayer fit for the occasion; but she knelt upon the floor and with tears she thanked God for the safe return of her lover, and implored Him to extend His continual protection over him.

When Mr. Westmoreland came home at half-past eight, he was astonished to find that his daughter had forgotten to put out the bread and cheese and beer. Heard one ever of housewife forgetting to lay the supper? And though he talked about nothing but Jack Easterbrook—his unexampled sufferings and his wonderful and providential preservation—this strange daughter of his was so cold and unfeeling about her old playfellow that she hardly said a word, but made haste to go to bed, where she was removed from her father's chatter, and could lie contentedly awake all night long, her foolish heart beating with the joy of this great happiness.

CHAPTER XIII.

JACK ASHORE.

The next day, accompanied by the Admiral and Captain Petherick, Jack went to the Navy Office in Seething Lane to report himself.

And here began trouble he did not expect. For, seeing that they had long since written off the ship as cast away, and her company as dead, at first it appeared as if Jack had lost his seniority for certain, even if he had not been removed from the King's service. The latter view was stoutly maintained by the clerks, who argued that if a man has been written off as dead, he must be dead, or else—a thing impossible and absurd, if not treasonable—the Navy Office must be charged with error; so that, if he should afterwards be so rash as to return, he must either be considered out of the service, or must begin again at the bottom of the ladder; otherwise their books would have to be rewritten; very likely the Estimates must be amended, and, perhaps, even a new audit undertaken. There was much correspondence on this subject carried on between the various departments; and, for aught I know, it may still be going on. While it was still in agitation, they began to send him about, like a ball at the game of cricket, from one office to another. First they sent him to the Surveyor's Department, which required him to make a return of the ship's stores and their expenditure up to the conclusion of the voyage; and asked him, also, to produce the purser's, bo's'n's, and carpenter's accounts, the muster-book and the log-book, these books being always, by regulation, required of the Captain on his return. The clerks in the Navy Office, who receive fifty pounds a year, and live at ten, or even twenty, times that rate in war time—thus showing how an honest man may prosper merely by the handling of ship's books and the passing of the Captain's papers—gave this young officer, from whose handling no profit could be obtained for themselves, as much trouble as Jacks-

in-office possibly can; and, being themselves bound and tied by all kinds of rules, they are able to hamper grievously any officer who doth not first grease their palms.

Next, when Jack expected to receive the six years' pay which was certainly due to him, there was trouble with the Comptroller's Department, which contended that, as he had not served for more than two years, he was entitled to no more than so much pay, and that only when it could be proved that he had served to the satisfaction of the Captain, who, we know, was dead and gone; and that, as regards the four years of wandering and captivity, they must not count as service at all.

Thirdly, when Jack asked permission to pass his examination in seamanship for Lieutenant's rank, it was objected by the clerks of the Secretary's Department, first, that he had not, in accordance with the regulations, put in his log-books or journals; secondly, that he could not show the certificate of the Captain; and, thirdly, that he had not served for the six years required by the rules of the service. At all these vexatious delays Jack lost his temper, and would, in the Navy Office itself, give the clerks, in good fo'ks'le English, his opinion as to their motives and their honesty, which, of course, exasperated these gentlemen, and made them stand out still more stiffly for the letter of the law.

Now, while these things were under consideration, the Commissioners themselves, being informed of what had happened, sent for Jack and examined him personally concerning the ship's course, the discoveries she had made, the natural riches of the Islands among which he had sailed, and the possibility of establishing settlements and posts upon them which might prove effective in restraining the insolence of the Spanish, and in preventing the establishment of the French power in those regions. Finally, they instructed him to draw up, without further delay, a Report upon the voyage, as full as his memory would allow, for the information of the Commissioners and the Government, containing all that he could remember of the course, and what he had observed concerning those islands, and especially on the force of the Spaniards on the South American shores; and, which was no doubt gall and wormwood to the clerks, my Lords the Commissioners were graciously pleased to order that the rules of the service should in this case be suspended, and that, in consideration of Mr. Easterbrook's previous good character, and undoubted sufferings after the wreck of his ship—for which he could not be held in any way accountable—his seniority should be restored to him, his years of wandering and captivity should be all counted as years of service, and that he should therefore receive full pay for the whole six years of service as midshipman on board a first-rate—namely, at two pounds five shillings a month, which made the handsome sum of one hundred and sixty-two pounds; and, lastly, that he should be permitted, on passing his examination, to assume the rank and uniform of Lieutenant, with the assurance of a commission to a ship as soon as it was possible to find one for

him. This promise was given him so gravely, and by so great a personage, that Jack placed the most certain trust in it.

It was easier for Jack to pass his examination in seamanship and navigation, and to put on his new uniform, than to write the Report asked of him; for he had never the pen of a ready writer, nor had he the least knowledge of the art of composition; he had forgotten how to spell even simple words, having been deprived of books for four years; and he had almost forgotten how to write. He therefore, by the Admiral's advice, sought the help of my father, who questioned him minutely on every point; and then, with the assistance of the charts, drew up, with his own hand, the required Report; though, with pardonable license, it purported to be written by none other than Mr. Easterbrook. It contained all the information which the author could elicit by careful and repeated examination, and, if published, would have proved a work of the greatest curiosity and instruction, embellished with the charm of learned and scholarly style which was so much admired in my father's sermons, enriched with reflections proper for the various scenes and adventures through which the (supposed) writer passed, and made useful for meditation by scriptural references. The Report was accompanied by a chart showing part of the western coast of New Holland, with that portion of the Pacific Ocean lying south of the Equator over which the 'Countess of Dorset' had sailed. This part of the sea was depicted, by the hand which drew the chart, as covered with islands, on both sides of the ship's way, lying as thick as daisies on a grass border. Mr. Westmoreland it was who drew the chart; but he was advised and assisted by Jack himself, and by Mr. Brinjes. He painted the water blue, and the islands and coasts red. Another hand—I say not whose—decorated those parts of the ocean where no ship hath yet sailed, and nothing is yet known, with spouting whales, dolphins at play, sea-lions sporting on rocks, and canoes filled with black men. The same hand designed and painted in the northern part of the ocean, off the Island of California, the lively representation of an engagement between the great seven-decked Spanish galleon from Manila and a small English vessel, the former striking her colours, and the latter flying the flag of her country, and not the 'Jolly Roger,' as Mr. Brinjes desired. In the left-hand corner Mr. Westmoreland drew the mariner's compass, below which he wrote a respectful dedication to my Lords the Commissioners, signed with the name of John Easterbrook, midshipman on board the 'Countess of Dorset.' The whole was finished and adorned with many flourishes, and in the Penman's finest style. He was so proud of his work that, I believe, he expected nothing less than a public commendation of it in the 'London Gazette,' with a handsome reward in money.

Strange to say, this Report, which we hoped would have been published by order of the Admiralty, was received in silence, and was never afterwards noticed at all. I know not what became of it, for Jack obtained no acknowledgment of it, nor was any praise

or reward, that I ever heard of, given to the Penman, and I suspect that the Report has never been read at all, but still lies on the shelves of the Navy Office. But, in truth, the wreck of the 'Countess of Dorset' made little stir at the time, because this intelligence arrived when the public mind was greatly agitated by the depredations of the French privateers which were now sweeping the Channel and picking up our merchantmen, and with the efforts made by the Government to protect our coasts and the seas, so that the loss of this ship more than three years before, even in so lamentable a manner, affected people little. All this done, however, Jack returned to Deptford, taking up his quarters with the Admiral, and in very good spirits, being well assured that before long he would have his commission, and that there was going to be a long and spirited war, the French having begun with great vigour, and being already flushed with success, so that they would take a great deal of beating. He had also jingling in his pocket—no sweeter music, while it lasts—the whole of his pay for six years. With this money he was enabled to purchase a new outfit for himself, having landed, as we have seen, with nothing in the world—no, not even so much as a shirt. However, he very soon procured a sea-chest, and filled it once more with instruments, books, and a new kit, including his Lieutenant's uniform, in which it must be confessed he looked as gallant and handsome an officer as ever put on the blue and white, with none of the effeminacy and affected daintiness which too often spoil the young soldier as well as the London beau. Rather did Jack incline to the opposite vice, being, as his best friends must admit, quite deficient in his graces, ignorant of polite manners and conversation, unused to the society of ladies, and, among men, knowing but little of what some have called the coffee-house manner—that, I mean, which one learns by intercourse with strangers and general company, in which it is necessary to concede as well as demand, to yield as well as to maintain. Yet no swaggerer, or offender against the peace of quiet men, though he certainly walked with his head in the air, as if the whole world belonged to him, and, as if it was his right, took the wall of everyone, unless an old man, a cripple, or a woman, and that with so resolute an air that even the bully-captains of the street—who are always ready to shoulder and elbow peaceful men into the gutter, and, on a mild remonstrance, to clap hand to sword-hilt, and swear blood and murder—these worthies, I say, stepped meekly, and without a word, into the mud when they beheld this young sea-lion marching towards them, over six feet in height, with shoulders and legs like a porter's for breadth and strength, splendid in his blue coat with gold-laced hat, his crimson sash, his white silk stockings, and white breeches. One thing I commended in him, that he wore his own hair, having it powdered decently, and tied in a bag with a black ribbon, a fashion which especially becomes a sailor, first, because a wig at sea, where everything should be taut and trim, must be troublesome; and

secondly, because if it be blown overboard what is a man to do for another?

Fortunately for the street captains, Jack went seldom to London, where the noise of the carts and the crowd in the streets offended him. He loved not to be jostled. And the amusements of the town pleased him not. Once we went together to see the play at Drury Lane; the piece was a comedy, very ingenious and witty, representing modern manners, or that part of modern manners which belongs to the nobility, where, I suppose, there is always intrigue, and the conversation always sparkles with epigram; the meaner kind know not this kind of life. It is pleasant to look on, and the house laughed and applauded. But Jack sat glum, and presently grew impatient and went out, and would have no more of it.

'Why,' he said, 'call this a play of modern life? If a man were to say to me one-half of what these people continually say to each other—one calling the other, though in fine words, ass, rogue, liar, or clown—I would have cleared the whole stage long ago. Where is the English spirit gone? Let us get away.'

I asked him whether he did not think the theatre made a fine sight, with the beautiful dresses of the ladies. But even this did not please him.

'Dresses?' he said, 'why, they are designed for no other purpose than to make the poor souls hideous. Hoops, powder and paint, hair dressed up—I should like, my lad, to show you beside them a bevy of South Sea Island girls, barefooted, with a simple petticoat tied round them, and their long hair flying loose. Then would you understand how a woman should look. I know a girl'—he checked himself—'well, put her, dressed as she is, in a box at the theatre, and she would be like the full moon among the twinkling stars.'

I might have replied (which is, I suppose, the truth) that women have no thought of form, and cannot understand that curve which Hogarth has drawn. Therefore, they understand not why men love a woman's figure, and regard Fashion as nothing more than an exhibition of costly and beautiful stuffs, silk, lace, and embroidery, to set off which the figure serves as a frame or machine, on which they may be hung. Otherwise women would strive for a fashion at once becoming and fitted to the figure, which they would then never alter, as the Greeks retained always the same simple mode.

With these views as to ladies' dress, it is easy to understand that Jack found very little pleasure in visiting Ranelagh, or Vauxhall, though the freedom of Bagnigge Wells was more to his taste. Nor did he delight in the coffee-houses. I took him to the Smyrna, where the politicians resort; and to the Rainbow, where the wits and templars are found; and to the White Lion, Wych Street, where they have concerts and women who sing. But he found the conversation insipid and the manners affected.

There was only one place of public resort which he heartily approved. It was the famous mughouse in Long Lane, whither

one evening we went, Mr. Brooking, the painter, taking us thither. It is frequented by many brethren of the brush, who for some reason are always more inclined to mirth and gaiety than the sober merchant. In this room there are fiddles and a harp: the room is divided into small tables which drink to each other; a president calls for a song, and one song is followed by another till midnight, the company drinking to each other from table to table, some taking strong beer, some flip, some rumbo, and some punch. Jack admired greatly the freedom of conversation, which had nothing of the coffee-house stiffness; the heartiness with which one table would drink about with another; the tobacco and the singing, for which this mughouse was then famous, and all with so many jokes and so much laughter, that it was a pleasure to think there was so much happiness left in the world.

But most of his time Jack spent at Deptford: his mornings in the Yard among the ships, and his evenings at the Sir John Falstaff with the Admiral, or in the Officers' Room at the Gun Tavern, whither the Lieutenants and the Midshipmen resorted for tobacco and punch.

There remained the afternoon, which, had he chosen, he might have spent with the Admiral's lady and Castilla.

'Our conversation,' said that sweet girl, 'hath no attraction for Jack. He loves sailors better than ladies, and tobacco better than tea; and he would rather hear the fiddle than the harpsichord, and the bawling by a brother-officer of a sea-song than a simple ditty from me.'

I suppose that Castilla was naturally a little hurt that Jack showed no admiration for those accomplishments, of which she was justly proud. No one played more sweetly, or sang more prettily, the songs which she knew than Castilla. Every girl likes a little attention; but this young sea-bear gave Castilla none. Every girl likes to think that her conversation is pleasing to the men: Jack showed no pleasure at all in Castilla's talk. He was thinking, though this we knew not yet, of another girl, whose charms bewitched him and made him insensible to any other woman.

At this period of his life it is certain that Jack loved not the conversation of ladies, finding it perhaps insipid after the fo'ks'le talk he had lately experienced in the French prison and his savage life among the Indians. 'If a man,' he said, 'must needs associate with women at all, give me a woman who is not squeamish over a damn or two, and lets a man tell his story through his own way, without holding up her hands to her face and crying fie upon him for naughty words; and one who can mix him a glass of punch—ay, and help him to drink it—and won't begin to cough directly his pipe of tobacco is lit. As for your cards, and your music, and your drinking of tea, it is all very well for landsmen. I dare say you like handing about the cups for Madame and passing the cream and sugar to the young misses.'

'You can take your tea as the Admiral takes his, Jack, with a dram of rosa solis after it.'

'What is it at best, but a medicine? Why not ask people to come and drink physic together? Why not ask Mr. Brinjes to prescribe, as he does, his tea of betony, speedwell, sago, or camomile? Or, if you must drink messes, there is chocolate, as the Spaniards have it. But as for tea, with the strumming of a harpsichord, and playing at cards for counters, and ladies talking fiddle-faddle, and Castilla asking you if you like this, or you would rather choose the other, I confess, my lad, I cannot endure it.'

'Castilla, Jack? Surely, she is to your taste?'

'Why, as for that, she is a pretty, delicate slip of a girl; she has got soft cheeks, it is true, and brown hair. Give me a tall, strong woman, who knows her own mind and what she likes, and likes it in earnest. Give me a woman with a spice of the Devil.'

'Well, Jack,' I said, surprised that he was not already in love with Castilla, 'there are plenty of women in Deptford who are all Devil, if they can tempt you.'

He had got already, though I knew it not, a woman who possessed her full share of the element he so much desired.

In the afternoons, therefore, he did not court the society of Castilla, but he went back to his old custom, and sat for the most part in the apothecary's parlour: not so much for the pleasure which he took in the conversation of that worthy and experienced gentleman, as that in this way he could enjoy the company of another person, who generally came in *accidentally* about the same time, but through the garden gate and the back door, while the Lieutenant marched in boldly, for all the world to see, through the shop. As Mr. Brinjes slept for the greater part of the afternoon, these two could say what they pleased to each other without fear of being overheard. And nobody so much as suspected that they were in this room except the assistant, who stood all day at the counter rolling boluses, pounding drugs, and mixing nauseous draughts. One might have chosen a sweeter smelling place for love-making, but then it had the look of a cabin, and something of its smell, and Jack found no fault with it.

'We talked,' Bess told me, in the time when her only pleasure was to think and talk about Jack, and when there was no one but myself with whom she could speak about him, 'We talked all the afternoon in whispers so as not to wake up Mr. Brinjes, who slept among his pillows. We sat in the window seat, my head on his breast, and his fingers played with my hair, and sometimes he kissed me. Jack told me all he was going to do: he was to get his commission, and go fighting; he would go for choice where there were the hardest knocks; they would make a vast deal of prize money, and he would get promoted, and made Captain, with twelve pounds a month, and then, when he came home, he would marry me'

'And did Mr. Brinjes,' I asked, 'never wake up, and interrupt this pastime?'

She laughed. 'Why, when he woke up, he would say, "Kiss her again, Jack. She is the best girl in Deptford. I have saved her for thee. Kiss her again." He has always been kind to me, and would never believe that Jack was drowned, and would still be talking of him, which was the reason why I knew him again when he came back. And then, Mr. Brinjes would sit up and talk about his treasure, and how he shall some day fit out a ship, and we are all to go sailing after the treasure, which is to be my marriage portion, when it is recovered, so that Jack will marry, after all, the greatest heiress in England.'

These things I heard, I say, after Jack went to sea again, and while Bess, like so many women, sat at home waiting and praying for her lover's safe return. All that time, no one knew, or so much as suspected, what was going on. Otherwise, I fear, hard things would have been said of poor Bess by those of her own sex. Men, in such matters, judge each other more leniently, and with less suspicion.

If, now, Jack had not been first recognised by Bess; if he had not gone to see her the first day of his arrival; if—but what doth it profit to say that if such and such things had not happened other things would have turned out differently? It is vain and foolish talk. Our lives are not governed by blind chance; and we must not doubt that, for some wise end which we know not and are not expected to know, or even to guess, all that happens to us is ordered and settled for us beforehand.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MEDDLESOME ASSISTANT.

The first trouble came to the lovers through the meddlesomeness and malignity of the Apothecary's assistant. Had Jack known what this man did, I think he would have made him swallow the contents of every bottle in the shop. But he never knew it: nor had he the least reason to suspect the assistant. James Hadlow (which was his name) was a man of small stature and insignificant aspect, made ridiculous by his leathern apron, which covered the front of him from chin to toes, and was too long, having been made for a taller man, his predecessor. His eyes, as has been already stated, were, as to their movements, independent of each other. He seldom spoke, and went about his business steadily and quietly, a man apparently without passions, who had no more compassion for a sick man than for a log of wood; a man who never loved a woman or had a friend, and who, when he was afterwards knocked on the head in a waterman's house of call while dressing wounds caught in a drunken broil, left no one to lament his loss. Neither man nor

woman in Deptford ever regarded him at all, any more than one regards the fellow who brings the wine at a tavern. Yet, which is a thing we should never forget, there is no man so meek that he cannot feel the passion of resentment, and none so weak that he cannot do his enemy a mischief. Now, for something that was said or done or perhaps omitted—I know not what—this man conceived a malignant desire for revenge. I know not which of the three had offended him: perhaps Jack, who was masterful, and despised little and humble men; perhaps Mr. Brinjes himself, who was hard towards his servants; perhaps Bess. But, indeed, if a creeping thing stings one, do we stop to inquire why it hath done us this mischief?

Everybody in the town knew that Aaron Fletcher wanted to marry Bess, and that, in her pride, she would have nothing to say to him, and had refused him a dozen times. It was also known that Aaron went about saying that he would crack the crown of any man who ventured to make love to his girl—calling her openly his girl—even if he were a commissioned officer of the King. When so tall and stout a fellow promises this, young men, even brave men, are apt to consider whether another woman may not be found as beautiful. Therefore, for some time, those who would willingly have courted Bess kept away from her, and, in the long run, I am sure that Aaron would have triumphed, being constant in his affections, as he was strong and brave. Unhappily for him, Jack Easterbrook returned. First of all, when Aaron came up from Gravesend, a few days later, and became a peaceful boat-builder again, in place of a smuggler, he began to watch and to spy upon the movements of Bess, employing a girl whose father worked for him at his boat-building, and lived in a house nearly opposite to that of Mr. Westmoreland. She reported that Bess stayed at home all day long, and though Lieutenant Easterbrook had been to the house, it was only to see her father, who came to the door and spoke with him there, and Bess never met him. So that although Aaron heard the story of her recognising him in his rags, he thought little of that, and made up his mind that the Lieutenant had quite forgotten the girl, and cared no more about her, even if he had ever thought of her; and when Jack, by the grace of my Lords the Commissioners, appeared in his new uniform, he seemed to be so much raised above Bess in rank that it was impossible he should any longer think of her. Moreover, Aaron discovered that the Lieutenant's mornings were spent in the Yard, his afternoons with Mr. Brinjes, and his evenings at the tavern; so that, except for the fact that there was no woman at all in the daily history of the Lieutenant—a suspicious circumstance where a sailor is concerned—he felt satisfied. This officer would go away again soon; meantime he thought no more about Bess. When the Lieutenant was gone, his own chance would come. For my own part, I sincerely wish that things had been exactly as Aaron wished them to be—namely, that Jack had quite forgotten the girl, and that he

had fallen in love with Castilla or someone else, and that Bess—weary of much importunity or softened in heart—had accepted the hand of this great burly fellow, who loved her so constantly. Whereas—but you shall see.

It happened, however, one evening about eight o'clock, when Jack had been at home some three weeks, that Aaron, sitting alone in his house, which stood on one side of his boat-building yard, overlooking the river between the Upper and the Lower Water Gate, heard footsteps in his yard without. He rose, and opening the door called to know who was there at that time, and bade the visitor come to the house without more ado.

His visitor proved to be the man Hadlow.

'What the devil do you want?' asked Aaron. Mr. Brinjes himself was a man to be treated with the greatest respect, but his assistant, who was not credited with any magical powers, and could certainly not command rheumatics or give any more pain than is caused by the drawing of a tooth, was regarded with the contempt which attaches to the trade of mixing nauseous medicines. 'What do you want here, at this time? I have not sent for any of your bottles, and I don't want any of your leeches.'

'I humbly ask your pardon, Mr. Fletcher. I have brought no bottles and no leeches.'

'Then what are you come for?'

'I humbly ask your pardon, again, Mr. Fletcher, seeing that I am but a poor well-wisher and admirer——'

Here Aaron discharged a volley of curses at the man, which made his knees to tremble.

'I have come, Mr. Fletcher, desiring to do my duty, though but a poor apothecary's assistant, who may one day become an apothecary myself; when, sir, if a tooth wants to be drawn, or a fever to be reduced, or a rheumatism——'

Here Mr. Fletcher gave renewed proof of impatience.

'Then, Sir, I have come to tell you a thing which you ought to know.'

'Say it out, then, man.'

'First, I am afraid of angering you.'

Mr. Fletcher turned and went back into his room, whence he emerged, bearing a thick rope's-end about two and a half feet long. This, in the hands of so big and powerful a man as Aaron Fletcher, is a fearful weapon. He used it for the correction of his 'prentices; and it was very well known that there was nowhere a workshop where the 'prentices were better behaved or more industrious Such was the wholesome terror caused by the brandishing of a rope's-end in the hands of this giant.

'Hark ye, mate,' he said, balancing this instrument, so that the assistant turned pale with terror, and his eyes rolled about all ways at once, 'you have angered me already, and if you anger me more, you shall taste the rope's-end. Wherefore, lose no more time.'

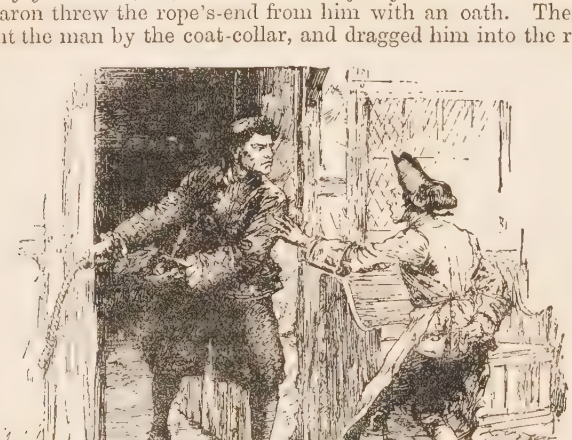
'It is about Bess Westmoreland. Oh, Mr. Fletcher!' for the

boat-builder raised his arm. 'Patience! Hear me out!' The arm went down. 'It is about Bess Westmoreland. Everybody knows that you have'—here the arm went up again. 'And it is about Lieutenant Easterbrook. Bess and the Lieutenant—oh, Sir! have patience till you hear what I have to tell you!'

'My patience will not last much longer. Death and the Devil, man! what do you mean by talking about Bess Westmoreland and Lieutenant Easterbrook? He has seen her but once since his return.'

'By your leave, sir, he sees her every day.'

Aaron threw the rope's-end from him with an oath. Then he caught the man by the coat-collar, and dragged him into the room.



'Come in here,' he said. 'By the Lord, if you are fooling me I will murder you!'

'If that is all,' the man replied, 'I have no fear. I am not fooling you, Mr. Fletcher; I am telling you the sober truth.'

'Man, I know how the Lieutenant spends his time. He is all the morning in the Yard, looking at the ships and talking to the officers. In the afternoon he sits with Mr. Brinjes, and in the evening he drinks at the tavern. And as for the girl, she never sees him.'

'You are wrong, sir. But oh! Mr. Fletcher, don't tell anyone I told you! The Lieutenant is the strongest man in the town—next to you, Sir—next to you—and the master can do dreadful things, if he chooses; and Bess herself in a rage—have you ever seen Bess in a rage?—oh, Sir, first promise me not to tell who gave you the intelligence.'

'Do you want a bribe?'

'No; I want no bribe. I hate 'em—I hate 'em. And the one I hate most is the Lieutenant, because if I was nothing better than the dust beneath his feet, he couldn't treat me with more contempt.'

'Go on, man. Tell me what you have to say and begone.'

'He goes every afternoon to Mr. Brinjes.'

'I know that.'

'You think he goes to talk to the old man, I suppose? He does not, then. My master sleeps all the afternoon. If he didn't sleep he would die. He says so. The Lieutenant goes there to make love to Bess.'

Aaron turned pale.

'She comes in every day by the garden gate and the back door, so that no one should suspect. And no one knows except me. But I know; I have looked through the keyhole. Besides, I hear them talking. Every day she comes, every day they sit together, he with his arm round her waist, or round her neck playing with her hair, and she with her head upon his shoulder—kissing each other, and making love, while the master is sound asleep by the fire.'

'Go on.'

'When the master wakes up he laughs, and he says, "Kiss her again, Jack." Then he laughs again, and he wishes he was young again.'

'Is that all?'

'That is all. For the Lord's sake, Mr. Fletcher, don't let anyone know who told you! Mr. Brinjes would kill me, I think; and mind you, Mr. Fletcher, whatever you do, remember that the master is able to kill you, and will too, if you harm the Lieutenant. He knows how to kill people by slow torture. There's a man in the town now, covered with boils and blains from head to foot, says it's the Apothecary hath bewitched him. Don't offend Mr. Brinjes, Sir.'

'My lad,' said Aaron, grimly, 'I doubt whether I ought not to take the rope's-end to your back for interfering with me and my concerns. Now, if you so much as dare to talk to any man in this place about what you have seen and told me—whatever happens afterwards—remember, whatever happens afterwards—it is not a rope's-end that I shall take to you, but a cudgel; and I shall not beat you black and blue, but I shall break every bone in your measly skin. Get out, ye miserable, sneakin', creepin' devil!'

That was all the thanks that the poor wretch Hadlow ever got for the mischief he had made; but the thought that he had made mischief consoled him. Something was now going to happen. So he went his way, contented with his evening's work.

Then Aaron sat down, and began to think what he should best do. He had been full of Christian charity towards the man who was not, after all, as he feared, his rival; there would be no more

talk of quarrelling and fighting between them; the shilling need not be fought for; the Lieutenant belonged to a different rank; in course of time Bess would tire of her resistance, and would yield. Now all was altered again. His old rival was still a rival, and there must be fighting.

Presently he rose, and walked up the street to the Penman's house.

Mr. Westmoreland was at the tavern with his friends the Assistant Shipwright, the Sexton, and the Barber. Bess was sitting alone, with a candle and her work.

'Bess,' said Aaron, 'I want to have a serious talk with you; may I come in?'

'No, Aaron. Stand in the doorway, and talk there. I am not going to let anybody say that I let you into the house when father was out of it; but if you want to talk foolishness, you can go away at once. It is high time to have done with foolishness.'

Aaron obeyed—that is to say, he remained standing at the open door, and he said what he had to say.

'It is for your own good, Bess; though you won't believe that anything I say is for your own good.'

'What is it, then?'

'It is this. Every afternoon you go to Mr. Brinjes' parlour to meet Lieutenant Easterbrook. You go out by your garden gate, so that no one may see or suspect, and the Lieutenant goes in by the shop. In the parlour, while the old man is asleep, you kiss each other, and make love.'

She sprang to her feet.

'Aaron, you are a spy!'

'I have been told this, but I did not spy it out for myself. Very well, then, spy or not, think, Bess. The Lieutenant has never yet got appointed to a ship; perhaps he never will; he has got no money; he cannot marry you if he would; if he were to marry you the Admiral would never forgive him; if he doesn't want to marry you—why—there—Bess.'

'Is that all you have to say?' she asked, trying not to lose her temper, because she had the sense to perceive that it would please her lover if she quarrelled about him with this man. 'Is that all, Aaron?'

'Why, I might say it a thousand times over; but it wouldn't amount to much more than this. He can't marry you if he wants to; and if he doesn't want to, a girl of your spirit ought to be too proud to listen to his talk.'

'Aaron, you shall pay for this,' cried Bess, with flaming eyes.

'You a lady, Bess? You to marry a King's officer? Know your own station, my girl. You are the daughter of the Penman, and you can neither read nor write. But there's a chance yet: send him packing first, and then you shall see.'

'Aaron, you shall pay,' she repeated; 'you shall pay.'

'I say, Bess, I will give you another chance. Before your name

gets dragged in the mud and you become the town talk, send him packing, and you shall have me if you please. Bess, I love you better than the Lieutenant, for all he wears silk stockings. I love you in spite of yourself, Bess. You've been a fool, but you've been carried away by your woman's vanity, and there's not much harm done yet. Give him up, Bess, and you shall find me loving and true.'

In his emotion his voice grew hoarse and thick. But he meant what he said, and it would have been better if Bess had taken him at his word on the spot. But she did not. She was carried away by her wrath, but yet so governed that she knew what she was saying.

'It is six years,' she said, 'since I looked on while you fought him and were beaten. I liked nothing better than to see you defeated and Jack victorious. Because, even then, you pretended to have some claim upon me, though I was but a little girl. Now, Aaron, I should like nothing better than to see Jack beat and bang you again until you cried for mercy.' Her eyes were flashing and her cheek red, and she stamped her foot upon the ground. 'Oh, I should like nothing better!'

'Should you, Bess, should you?' he replied, strangely, not in a rage at all, but with a great resolution.

'To see you lying at his feet. You, his rival!—you! Why, you may be bigger—so is a collier bigger than a little sloop. That is a great matter, truly! You his rival! To think that any woman whom he has once kissed should ever be able so much as to look at you—oh! Aaron! But you don't know; you are too common and ignorant to know the difference there is between you.'

'You would like to see him beat and bang me, would you, Bess? Why, then, it is as easy as breaking eggs. You shall have the chance. All you have to do is to tell your fine lover that, as regards that shilling—he will know what shilling I mean—I am waiting and ready to have that repaid, or to take it out in another way—he will know the way I mean. And then, my girl, if you like to be present, you can. But I promise you the beating and the banging will be all the other way, and your fine lover, gentleman and King's officer though he is, shall be on his knees before he finds time to swing his staff. You tell him that about the shilling. If you will not, I will send a message by another.'

'I will tell him. Now go away, Aaron, lest you say something which would anger me still more.'

So he went away. But Bess told her lover, who laughed, and said that Aaron was a greedy fellow whom there was no satisfying, but he should do his best to let him have a good shilling's-worth, and the full value of his money.

CHAPTER XV.

HORN FAIR.

This conversation happened in the second week of October. The opportunity of repaying the shilling occurred on the 18th of that month, which is St. Luke's Day, and consequently the first day of Horn Fair.

All the world has heard of this fair. It is not so famous a fair as that of St. Bartholomew's, the humours of which have been set forth by the great Ben Jonson himself; it has never, like that fair, been honoured by the presence of the Prince of Wales; nor has so ingenious a gentleman as Mr. Harry Fielding ever written plays to be acted at Horn Fair, as he hath done for Bartholomew. Nor is it as good for trade as the ancient Stourbridge Fair. Yet for noise, ribaldry, riot, and drunkenness it may be compared with any fair held in the three kingdoms, even with the old May Fair, now suppressed, which they say was the abode of all the devils while it lasted. As for trade, there is never anything sold there—neither horses, nor cattle, nor cloth, nor any pretence made of selling anything, except horns and things made of horn, with booths for children's toys, penny whistles, and the like, gingerbread, cockles, oysters, and so forth, together with strong drink, and that the worst that can be procured of every kind.

It is frequented by a motley crew, consisting of a noisy London rabble: rope-makers from St. George's, Ratcliffe Highway; sail-makers from Limehouse, shipwrights from Rotherhithe, sailors from Wapping, all the City 'prentices who can get holiday, the shabby gentry of the King's Bench rules, together with a sprinkling of beaux and gallants who come here to riot. Hither flock also a great concourse of men and women from the country, who come in their smock-frocks and new white caps, to drink, dance, look on and gape, bawl, laugh, and play upon each other those rough jokes which commonly lead to a fight. There is not, in fact, anywhere in the world a fair which hath a more evil reputation than Horn Fair. Yet I dare affirm that you shall not find a single London citizen who hath not paid one visit at least to Horn Fair; while there are many London dames—ay, of the finest—who have been tempted by the curiosity of their sex, and in order to see the humours of famous Horn Fair, have dared the dangers of a rabble seeking enjoyment after their kind, and in the manner which best pleases their brutish nature.

Yet it was in such a place as this, and among such people, that the Lieutenant was called upon by Aaron to redeem his promise and to fight him for the shilling; and, although he might very well have refused to answer the challenge in such a place, Jack

thought it incumbent upon his honour to fight, even though it should be like a Roman gladiator in the arena. Had he been invited to take a glass in a booth at the fair, or to eat hot cockles with bumpkins, he would have treated the proposition with scorn; but because he was asked to fight, his honour, forsooth! was concerned, and he must needs go—so sacred a thing is the law of honour concerning the duello. No doubt in this case his delicate sense of honour and his inclination jumped, as they say, and he was by no means displeased to try his courage, strength, and skill against so doughty a champion as Aaron Fletcher. Yet I do not think there was another officer in the King's Navy who would have done what he did.

All sorts of ridiculous stories are told of Horn Fair and its origin, with a foolish legend about King John, which I pass over as unworthy of credence, because every painter who hath studied Italian and ecclesiastical art, and the symbolical figures with which saints are represented, knows very well that Luke, the Evangelist, was always figured in the pictures having with him the horned head of an ox, for which reason, and no other, the Charlton Fair was called Horn Fair, being held on St. Luke's Day. It is a pity that the mob cannot be taught this—though, for my own part, I know not why an ox should go with the head of St. Luke—and so be persuaded to carry their horns soberly, in memory of the Saint who wrote the third Gospel.

The visitors, if the day is fine, begin to come down the river as early as eight in the morning, and for the most part they remain where they land, at Cuckold's Point, Redriff, eating and drinking until the procession is formed, which starts at eleven or thereabouts, and by that time there is a vast crowd, indeed, gathered together about the stairs, and the river is crowded with boats carrying visitors from London Bridge, or even from Chelsea. As for the quarrels of watermen and the splashing of the passengers and the exchange of scurrilous jokes, abuse, and foul language, it passes belief. However, the passengers mostly get safe to the stairs at last, and, after a quarrel with the waterman over the fare, they are permitted to land. Those who join in the procession array themselves in strange garments: some are dressed like wolves, some like bears, some like lions, some again like wild savages, and some like Frenchmen, Spaniards, Russians, or the lusty Turk, and some wear fearful masks; but all are alike in this respect, that they wear horns tied upon their heads in various fashions. The women among them, however, who ought rather to be at home, do not wear horns upon their heads, but masks and dominoes. Those who can afford it have ribbons round their hats, the streaming of which in the breeze greatly gratifies them; some carry flags and banners, all together shout and bellow continually, and the procession is followed by all the boys, to judge from their number, who can be found between Westminster on the west and Woolwich on the east.

This magnificent procession, which is almost as good as the Lord Mayor's show, leaves Rotherhithe, headed by drum and fife, at eleven in the forenoon, and marches through Deptford, across the bridge by way of the London Road, through Greenwich to Charlton Common.

Jack stood with me at the gate of the Admiral's house, looking on as these Tom Fools passed, playing their antics as they went along. It seemed to me strange that a man of his rank should take any pleasure in witnessing the humours of the mob; but I thought as a fool, because there is something in every sailor, whether he be an officer or not, which makes him delight in singing and dancing, and causes his ears to prick up at the sound of a fiddle or a fife. Besides, as regards this sailor, it was six years and more since he had seen any merry-making at all, unless, which I know not, the half-starved Indians who entertained him had any songs and dances of their own.

'I must go to the fair this afternoon, Luke,' he said; 'will you come with me, lad?'

'What will you do at the fair, Jack? It is a rude, rough place, not fit for a gentleman.'

'Do you remember the last time we went? It is seven years ago. Ever since I came home I have felt constrained to visit again the places where we used to play. There is the crazy old summer-house in the gardens. I have been there again. The place is not yet fallen into the Creek, though it is more crazy than ever.'

'And Mr. Brinjes' parlour? Have you been there?'

'I have been there,' he replied, with hesitation, 'once or twice—to look at his charts. His treasure is on an island in the North Pacific, whither our ship did not sail. Yes. I have been there—to see his charts, in the evening. In the afternoon, I find, he sleeps, and must not be disturbed.'

'And now, you must needs visit Horn Fair again. Well, Jack, I am a man of peace, and, very like, there may be a fight. So take with you a stout cudgel.'

'There is another reason also for my going,' he said. 'It is because Aaron Fletcher will play all-comers at quarterstaff.'

'Why, Jack, surely you would not play with Aaron before all this mob of rustics and common men?'

'I must, brave boy. For, look you, Aaron saved my life. There is no question about that. The boat must have gone down in half an hour, and I with it, if he had not lugged me out. Therefore, if he asks me to do so small a thing as to fight him, the least I can do is to gratify him, and to fight him at such place, and in such manner, as he may appoint. I promised him this, and now he sends me word to remind me of my promise.'

'But the man is a giant, Jack.'

'He is a strapping fellow. But, if he is six foot four, I am six foot one and a half. His reach is longer than mine, it is true. But do not be afraid. I have got back my strength, and I think I shall

give a good account of him. However, my word is passed to fight him when he wishes; and, whatever happens, I must go. He thinks to defeat me before all his friends. He is a braggart fellow, and we shall see, my lad.'

We walked over to Charlton after dinner; Jack in his Lieutenant's uniform, with new laced ruffles and laced shirt and cravat, very noble. He carried his sword, but, following my advice, he provided himself as well with a stout cudgel, in which, I confess, I placed more confidence than in his sword. For why? A man thinks twice about using a sword upon a mob as he would upon an enemy, but an oaken cudgel does not generally kill, though it may stun. Therefore, he lays about him lustily if he have a cudgel, and spares not.

There was no hurry about the quarterstaff play, which would not begin until three o'clock, and we strolled about the fair among the crowd, looking at the shows, of which there were many more than I expected to find. But Horn Fair is happily placed in the almanack, so that the people who live by shows, rope-dancing, and the like, can go from Stepney Fair to Charlton, and so from Charlton to Croydon Fair. There was, to begin with, a most amazing noise, with beating of drums, blowing of trumpets, banging of cymbals, ringing of bells, dashing of great hammers upon the boards, whistling, marrow bones and cleavers, each one thinking that the more noise he made the more attractive would be his show. The booths were filled with common things, but these gilded, tied with bright ribbons and gay-coloured paper, so as to look valuable, and with wheedling girls, in tawdry finery, to sell them. And here I found that my companion speedily forgot the dignity of an officer and became like a boy, buying things he did not want, because some black-eyed gipsy girl pressed them into his hand with a 'Sure your Honour will never regret the trifle for a fairing for your Honour's sweetheart. A proud and happy girl she is this day, to have her Captain home again.' And so on, he laughing and pulling out a handful of silver and letting her take as much as she pleased, whether for shoes, patterns, leather breeches, gingerbread, cheap books, or toys in horn, whatever she pleased to sell him. Jack bought enough of everything to stock a Foundling Hospital, but mostly left his purchases on the stalls where he found them, or gave them to the first pretty girl he met in the crowd. There certainly is something in the air of the sea which keeps in a man for a long time the eagerness of a boy. A London-bred young man of three-and-twenty, which was Jack's age, is already long past the enjoyment of things so simple as the amusements of a fair; he despises the shows, gauds, and antics which make the rustics and the mechanics gape and laugh. As for Jack, he must needs go everywhere and see everything; and this year there were a wonderful number of shows.

There was, for instance, the young woman of nineteen, already seven feet ten inches high, and said to be still growing, so that her

well-wishers confidently expected that when she should attain her twenty-fifth year, she would reach the stature of nine feet, or, perhaps, ten. We also saw the bearded woman. This *lusus naturæ*, or sport of nature, presented for our admiration a large full beard, a foot long and more, growing upon the whole of her face, cheeks, chin and lip, so that her mouth was quite hidden by it. She was by this time, unfortunately, fully fifty years of age, and her beard well grizzled, so that we had no opportunity of knowing how a woman in her youth and beauty would look with such an ornament to her face. It would then, I suppose, be soft and silky, and brown in colour. But perhaps she would look not otherwise than a comely young man. This woman was a great strong creature, who might have felled an ox with her fist; she had a deep voice and a merry laugh, and made no opposition when Jack offered her a cheerful glass. We saw the Irish giant, also, who was a mighty tall fellow, but weak in the knees; and the strong woman who tossed about the heavy weights as if they had been made of pasteboard, and lifted great stones with her hair. And, since where there are giants there must also be dwarfs, we saw the Italian Fairy, a girl of sixteen, no taller than eighteen inches, and said to be a princess in her own country. It has been remarked by the curious that whereas giants have always something in their carriage and demeanour as if they were ashamed of themselves, so dwarfs, on the other hand, are the most vainglorious and self-conceited persons imaginable. This little creature, for instance, dressed in a flowered petticoat and a frock of sarcenet, walked about her stage, carried herself and spoke with all the airs of a Court lady or a fine city madam, though where she learned these arts I know not. As for other shows, there was a menagerie wherein were exhibited a cassowary, a civet cat, a leopard, and a double cow—a cow, that is, with one head and two fore legs, but four hind legs. There was a theatre, where they performed the 'Siege of Troy' in a very bold and moving manner, and with much shouting and clashing of swords, though the performance was hurried, on account of the impatience of those without. There were lotteries in plenty, where one raffled for spoons of silver and rings of gold; but as for us, though we essayed our fortune everywhere, we got nothing. There was a fire-eater, who vomited flames, and put red-hot coals into his mouth; there was excellent dancing on the slack-rope, which is always to me the most wonderful thing in the world to witness; there was a woman who danced with four naked swords in her hands, tossing and catching them, presenting them to her breast, and all with so much fire and fury that it seemed as if she was resolved and determined to kill herself. Jack rewarded her after the dance with a crown and a kiss, both of which she received with modesty and gratitude. There was also a ladder-dance, in which a young man got upon a ladder and made it walk about, and climbed up to the top of it and over it, and sat upon the topmost rung, and yet never let it fall—a very dexterous fellow.

'Why,' said Jack, presently, 'what have you and I learned, Luke, that can compare with the things which these people can do? Grant that I know the name and place of every bit of gear in a ship, and that you can paint a boat to the life; what is that compared with dancing on the slack-rope, or balancing a ladder as this fellow does it?'

At the time I confess I was, like Jack, somewhat carried away by the sight of so much dexterity, and began to think that perhaps showmen, mountebanks, and jugglers have more reason for pride than any other class of mankind. Afterwards I reflected that the wisdom of our ancestors has always held in contempt the occupations of buffoon and juggler, so that, though we may acknowledge and even praise their dexterity, we are not called upon to envy or admire them.

Outside the booths, and apart from the theatres and shows, there was a stage, on which, at first sight, one only discerned a fiddler, a fifer, a drummer, and a fellow dressed in yellow and black, with a long tin trumpet. This was the stage of the great High German Doctor; his name I have forgotten, but it was a very high and noble sounding one. There were tables on the stage, and beside the musicians were the Doctor's zanies, who tumbled and postured, and danced the tight-rope; and his shell-grinders and compounders, every one of whom in turn harangued and bamboozled the mob. As for the Doctor himself, he was not at first on the stage at all: but presently the man with the tin trumpet blew a horrid blast, and bawled out, 'Room for the Doctor, Gentlemen! Room for the Doctor!' and the people parted right and left, while, mounted on a black steed, that learned person rode very slowly towards the stage. The saddle was covered with red velvet; it was provided with a kind of lectern, on which was a big folio volume, which the Doctor was reading, paying no heed to the crowd, as if no moment could be spared from study. A fellow dressed in crimson led the horse. The Doctor was a tall and stout man, with an extraordinary dignity of carriage, and solemn countenance, dressed in a gown of black velvet and a crimson velvet cap, like unto the cap of a Cambridge *Medicinæ Doctor*. Then the man with the tin trumpet hung out a placard upon the stage, on which was the great man's style and titles, and these he bellowed forth, for the information of those who could not read. We learned, partly from the placard, and partly from this fellow, that the great man was Physician to the Sophy of Persia, and to the Great Mogul, tooth-drawer to the King of Morocco, and corn-cutter to the Emperor of Trebizonde, the Grand Turk, and Prester John; that he was the seventh son of a seventh son; that it was seven days before he sucked, seven months before he cried, and seven years before he uttered a single word—so long was this wonderful genius in preparing for his duties. As for his medical studies, we were told that they had occupied his attention for five times seven years, in the cities of London, Leyden, Ispahan, Trebizonde, and Constantinople; and that he was at that

moment twelve times seven years of age, without a grey hair or a missing tooth, and with children not yet three years old, so efficacious were his own medicines as proved upon himself, while his servants never knew an illness or even an ailment (the drummer, I observed, had his face tied up for toothache). When this fellow had done, the music began, and the zanies tumbled over each other, and turned somersaults, while the mixers of the medicines bawled out jokes and made pretence to swallow their pills. Finally, the Doctor himself stood before us, and made his oration.

'Gentlemen all,' he said, 'I congratulate you on your good fortune in coming to Horn Fair this day, for it is my birthday; and on this anniversary I give away my priceless medicines for no greater charge than will pay for the bottles and boxes in which they are bestowed. On all other days they are sold for their weight in gold. I have here'—he held up a plaister—'the Cataplasma Diabolicum, or Vulnerary Decoction of Monkshood, which heals all wounds in twenty-four hours if applied alone; if taken with the Electuary Pacific—show the Electuary, varlets!—it heals in a couple of hours. I have the Detersive, Renefying, and Defecating Ophthalmic, which will cure cataracts and blindness, and will cast off scales as big as barnacles in less than a minute. I have, for earache, toothache, faceache, and tic, a truly wonderful vegetable, an infusion of peony, black hellebore, London pride, and lily root. Here is a bottle of Orvietans, for the expulsion of poison, price one shilling only. Here is the Balsamum Arthriticum; here the Elixir Cephalicum, Asthmaticum, Nephriticum et Catharticum. Gentlemen, there is no disease under the sun'—here the trumpeter blew the tin trumpet—'but I can cure it. Rheumatics'—bang went the drum—'Asthma'—bang went the drum between every word—'Gout—Sciatica—Lumbago—Pleurisy—Melancholy: in a word, there is nothing that I cannot cure at a quarter the cost of your town doctors. No more disease, Gentlemen, no more pain; step up and try the Cataplasma Diabolicum, the Electuary Pacific, the Detersive Ophthalmic, and the Vegetable Infusion. Step up and buy the medicines that will make you and keep you in hearty good health so that you shall live to a hundred and fifty—ay, even, with care, to two hundred and fifty—knowing neither age, sickness, nor decay.'

The people laughed incredulously, and yet believed every word, which I suppose will always be the case with the mob, and began to push and shove each other in their eagerness to buy the wonderful medicines. For his part, Jack listened open-mouthed.

'Why,' he said, 'what fools we are, Luke, to let this foreign fellow go, who hath so many secrets? Why do not we keep him and get his secrets out of him, and so let there be no more sick lists to be kept?'

Then he would have gone on the stage and bought everything the Doctor had to sell, but I dissuaded him, pointing out that the fellow was only an impudent impostor.

And before every show were ballad-singers bawling their songs. Their principal business at fairs is not, I am told, to sell their ballads so much as to attract a crowd and engage their attention while the scoundrel pickpockets go about their business unwatched (one was caught in the fair while we were there, and, for want of a pump, was put head first into a tub of cold water, and kept there till he was well-nigh drowned); and everywhere there were men who grinned and postured, girls who danced, boys who walked on stilts, gipsies who told fortunes, women bawling brandy-balls and hot furmety; there was the hobby-horse man, with his trumpet and his 'Troop, every one, one, one!' and a hundred more, too numerous to mention. And for food, they had booths where they sold hot roast pork, with bread and onions and black porter, a banquet to which the gentry at the fair, whose stomachs are not queasy, did infinite justice.

We saw so many shows and booths, and Jack appeared so contented and happy in looking at them, that I confess I was in hopes he would forget his promise to fight Aaron, the prospect of which, in this fair, crowded with the rudest and roughest men, pleased me less every moment. But, if you please, his honour was concerned. Therefore, when the hour approached he remembered it—to be sure, one might be expected to remember a promise to meet and to fight so big a man as Aaron Fletcher—and he cast about in order to find the amphitheatre or booth where the duello was to be held. We presently found it, on the skirts of the fair, and a little retired from the noise. It proved to be nothing more than a square inclosure of canvas, fastened to upright poles, with no roof. Those who came to see the sport paid an admission fee of one penny. Within the booth there were rough benches set along the sides, and in the middle a broad stage two feet high. There was music playing as we went in, and on the stage a little girl of ten dancing very prettily and merrily. The place was filled: I knew many of the faces: those, namely, of the Deptford men, come to stand by their champion. It appeared as if they knew what was going to take place, for at the sight of the Lieutenant there were passed round looks and nods and every indication of heartfelt joy. Drawers ran about with tankards and mugs of ale, and most of the men were accommodated with pipes of tobacco. There were also some women present, and of what kind may be easily imagined. Sufficient to say that they were fit companions of the men. The people did not greatly care for the dance, which was too simple and innocent for them. When the little girl finished and jumped down from the stage, there came forward a scaramouch dressed in the Italian fashion, who played a hundred tricks, posturing and twirling his legs about as if they had been without bones or joints. But the people were impatient, and bawled for him to have done. Wherefore, he, too, retired, and then they roared for Aaron Fletcher, the Deptford men being foremost in their desire for his appearance. He leaped upon the stage, therefore, quarterstaff in hand, stripped

to his shirt, and twirling his weapon over his head as if it had been a little walking-cane. Then the place became hushed, as happens when there is going to be a fight of any kind, because fighting goes to the heart of every man, and makes him serious and anxious at the beginning, but full of fury as the fight goes on. Aaron was a terrible great fellow to look at, thus stripped of his coat and standing on the stage before us all.

'I challenge the best man among ye,' he said, looking at the Lieutenant, 'gentleman or clown, King's officer or able seaman, for a guinea or a groat, as ye please.'

Then he twirled his staff again, and walked round the stage, like a gamecock before the battle.

'Shall I give him a chance with the meaner kind first, to show his mettle and to breathe him?' said Jack. ''Twould be charitable.'

There sprang upon the stage, from the crowd, a stout and lusty youth, not so tall as Aaron, but of good length of limb and resolute face. 'Twas the champion of Eltham, as we learned from the crowd. He was clad in a smock-frock, which he laid aside.

'I will play a bout for a crown,' he said, lugging out the money, while his friends shouted.

Then they began; but, Lord! the countryman was no match for the Deptford player, and the shouting of our townsmen was loud to see the play that Aaron made, and the dexterity with which his staff, as quick as lightning, played on his adversary's head and ribs, his legs and arms. So that very soon, throwing down his staff, the fellow leaped from the stage, and would have no more.

'It was pretty,' said Jack. 'The rustic hath had his lesson.'

Then another: this time one who had played and won at Bartholomew Fair, and now advanced with confidence, trusting to his activity and the rapidity of his attack, which were, indeed, astonishing. But, alas! his leaps and bounds were of little avail against the long reach and the heavy hand of the giant; and he fell, to rise no more.

Then the mob roared and shouted again.

'This fellow is soon satisfied,' said Jack. 'It is my turn now.'

He laughed, and took off coat, waistcoat, and hat; giving them to me for safety. Thus reduced to his shirt, he stepped forward and mounted the stage, the crowd being overjoyed and beyond themselves in the anticipation of a fight between their champion and a gentleman in laced ruffles, white silk stockings, and powdered hair. Certainly, nothing so good as this had ever before been seen at the fair.

Then I became aware of a strange thing. There stood within the door—not sitting down, but standing—just within the folds of the canvas, no other than Bess Westmoreland and her father. Who would have thought to see the Penman at Horn Fair? Nothing could be more out of place than this pair among the waterside men and the ruffians in the booth. Bess stood upright, holding her father's hand, not for her own protection but to assure him of his safety, while he, stooping and round-shouldered, looked about him as if fearing violence of some kind. I now perceived that Bess was come for no other purpose than to see this fight—to be sure, it was arranged beforehand, and there was no reason why she should not hear of it from Aaron; but I had not thought Bess would have come to such a place to see such a sight. I declare I had not the least suspicion of the truth, so carefully had the lovers kept their secret. Bess took no notice at all of the rabble, her eyes fixed upon the stage as if the people were not even present; no great lady waiting at the door of the theatre for her chair could look more proudly upon the common herd—the link-boys, chairmen, and lookers-on—as if they were beneath her notice. Her lips were set, and her brow contracted, and her cheek was pale; but I knew not the cause, unless it were from terror at the approaching battle. Yet why did she come to see it?

She came, as I learned soon afterwards, confident in her lover's triumph, and anxious to increase the discomfiture of his adversary, and her rejected suitor. Since that day I have ceased to wonder why the Roman ladies and matrons took pleasure in witnessing the fights of gladiators, and why in the days of tourna-

ments gentle ladies went to see their lovers tilt. The joy of battle, I am sure, is as great in the heart of woman as in that of man. Certainly, no one in the crowd watched the combat with more eagerness and interest than did Bess, whose eyes flashed, lips parted, and bosom heaved with the passion of the fight. As for her father, in the hush before the battle began, I heard him exclaim, 'It is the Lieutenant and Aaron! Oh! dear! . . . dear! they will do each other some grievous harm. Bess, ask them to desist. Is it for this you brought me here, wilful girl? Grievous bodily hurt they will do to each other.'

No one paid any heed to that poor man. Even the drawers ceased to run about with tankards, and no man called for drink.

Jack took the quarterstaff, which had already been used twice ineffectually, poised it in his hands, and turned a smiling face to his adversary.

'I have kept my promise, Aaron,' he said; but this the mob did not hear. 'We will fight for that shilling. Bess is in the doorway, looking on. It seems as if we were fighting for more than a shilling, does it not?'

Aaron made no reply in words, but he laughed aloud. Perhaps he remembered how, seven years before, when last he fought with Jack, Bess was looking on at his defeat. This time he was confident in his strength. She was come again, looking to see him worsted. She should be disappointed.

There was no lack of courage about the man. Courage he had, and plenty. He was a good three inches taller than his adversary, which at quarterstaff gives a great advantage; he was quick of eye and of fence; he was heavier and stronger; and his two first combats had scarcely breathed him. On the other hand, he was opposed to a man who for six years and more had led the hardest life possible, with no indulgences—wine, beer, tobacco, indolence, or anything to soften his muscles or dim the eye. Now Aaron, as everybody knew, was fond of a glass; and though no sot, once a week or so was drunk. And he had already begun to put on flesh. As they stood, face to face, one might have gone a hundred miles and never seen so fine a couple.

And then, at tap of drum, the fight began, and for awhile everybody was mute.

Jack, I perceived, was resolved at first to stand on the defensive, for two reasons. First, because his enemy showed wrath in his scowling eyes, and therefore would, perhaps, spend his breath and strength in furious onslaught. Next, because, as he told me afterwards, it was not until he held the weapon in his hands that he remembered he had not played for four years and more. One would think he might have remembered so important a fact before. It is an admirable custom in some ships for the crew, both officers and men, to amuse themselves daily at quarterstaff, singlestick, and boxing; but Jack had been out of a ship for four years. Still, if his hand was a little out, his eye was true. Aaron's game was

twofold. First, he would beat down and overpower his man by superior strength and advantage in reach; and secondly, by feints and leaps, shifting his ground, and changing the length of his weapon, by coming to close quarters and then retreating, to cheat his adversary's eye and disconcert him even for a single moment, when he would deal him a decisive stroke. This was a very good design, and hath often served. But Jack was not to be so caught. No man at quarterstaff, however strong, can beat down an adversary who has learnt the art of parry, which is more than half the battle; no man, however quick and active, can disconcert an enemy who knows how to follow his eyes steadily. Jack, therefore, lost no ground and was never touched, so that, though he delivered no stroke, the ease with which he met Aaron's blows presently caused the spectators to roar with admiration. In all kinds of fighting there are two first principles, or rules, to be carefully learned. The first of these is never to lose sight of your enemy's eye, and the next is never to lose your temper. A third is to know how to strike when the occasion comes. If a man at this rough game chance to lose his temper, he loses the game. This is what Aaron did. It maddened him that he could not strike his enemy, and it maddened him still more to hear the roars of the people at the dexterity which defeated him. Moreover, he knew that Bess was looking on; therefore he became more furious, and delivered his blows more rapidly, but with less precision. 'Don't fight wild, Aaron!' shouted his friends, but too late; while the fellows in the booth began to jeer and laugh at him, asking why he did not strike his man with a 'Now, Aaron! now's your turn! Hit him on the head! There's a brave stroke missed!' and so on, foreseeing that if the Lieutenant could only keep cool, and wait for his chance, the victory would be his.

Jack told me afterwards that, while they played, the old skill came back to him, and his confidence; so that he could afford to play with his man and bide his time, receiving all the blows, whether at full length, half length, or close quarters, with patience and good temper.

This strange duel, in which one man struck and the other only parried, lasted long; insomuch that the spectators left off shouting, and looked on with open mouths. It lasted so long that Aaron was now raging and foaming, breathing heavily, and plunging as he struck with the staff. As for me, I wondered why Jack did not strike. He had his reason: he wished to strike but once, and therefore he waited. At last the chance came. Aaron left his head exposed, and then, with a thud which might have been heard outside the booth, the Lieutenant's staff resounded on the side of his enemy's head, and Aaron fell prone upon the stage—senseless.

It is said that, when a gentleman fights a common fellow, the mob is always pleased that the gentleman shall be victorious. I know not if this be true, but I know that the fellows in the booth

rose as one man, even the Deptford men, and cheered the victor to the sky.

Jack stepped from the stage, a little heated by the fight, and put on his coat, waistcoat, and hat.

'Aaron is a very pretty player,' he said, 'but he should not have challenged me until he was in better condition. There were half a dozen poor fellows aboard the "Countess of Dorset" who would have beaten him. Here, my lads'—he now became again an officer—'Aaron is a Deptford man, like me. Take care of him, and spend this guinea in drinking the King's health.'

So the fellows tossed their greasy caps in the air, and the tapsters tied their apron-strings tighter, and began to run about with tankards and mugs while the guinea was drinking out, and Jack strode down the booth, the men making a lane for him, and crying, 'Huzza for the noble Captain!' Meanwhile, no one took any notice of the fallen champion, who presently recovered some of his senses, and sat up, staring about him with distracted eyes.

'Why, Mr. Westmoreland,' said Jack, at the door, as if he had not seen him before, 'you at Horn Fair? I might as soon have expected to see you at Vauxhall.'

'Nay, sir, your Honour knows I value not such merriment. But Bess would bring me here. 'Tis a wilful girl. Nothing would serve her but she must see the humours of the fair. Girls still crave for mirth.'

'You ought to be at home among your books, Mr. Westmoreland. Go home. Luke will walk with you, and I will take care of Bess—good care, good care—and bring her safe home, after she has seen the fair.—Come, Bess, will you see the wild beasts, or the slack-rope dancers?—Take him home, Luke; take him home.'

So saying, he seized Bess by the hand, and drew her away, leaving the old man, her father, with me. I observed that, though Bess cried, 'Oh!' and 'Pray, Lieutenant,' and 'Don't, Lieutenant,' and 'Fie, Lieutenant,' she laughed and took his hand without any reluctance, but rather a visible satisfaction, because she had certainly got the properest man in all the fair.

'The Lieutenant,' said Mr. Westmoreland, 'is strong enough to protect any girl—though, as for Bess, Mr. Luke, she is strong enough to protect herself. Nevertheless'—he broke off and sighed—'nevertheless, a motherless girl is a great charge for a peaceful man, especially when she is strong and determined, like my Bess. What am I to do, sir? I cannot whip and flog her; I cannot lay my commands upon her if she doth not choose to obey me. I cannot make her marry if she still says nay. And the men, they are afraid of her pride and wilfulness. Such a headstrong girl will never make an obedient wife.'

'It is a situation, Mr. Westmoreland,' I said, 'full of danger.'

'What is worse, Mr. Luke,' he went on, 'what is worse is that she scorns the man Aaron Fletcher himself—a substantial man, though they do say he knows the coast of France. Yet he would

cheerfully take the risk of her masterful temper and her wilful ways if she would but say him yea.'

'Why, Mr. Westmoreland, as for that, I am sure there are plenty of men ready to be fired by such charms as your daughter Bess possesses.'

He shook his head.

'Charms? I know not what they are. Black hair and black eyes may please some, but I know not whom. Let us go from this wicked and riotous place, Mr. Luke. Peaceful men have no place here. The Lieutenant will bring her home; though, more likely than not, they will quarrel on the way, both of them being masterful, and Bess will have to find her way back without him. Yet she ought to be proud of the honour he hath done her, and perhaps she will be meek for once, and behave pretty.'

So we turned and made our way out of the throng, and so home.

'I am sorry,' said Mr. Westmoreland presently, 'I am very sorry that Mr. Easterbrook hath fought and vanquished Aaron Fletcher. I would rather have seen Aaron the conqueror.'

'Why?'

'Because Aaron is a cruel and a vindictive man. He was bragging among his friends of the sport they would witness at the fair, and he has been humiliated. Now he will have his revenge, if he can, for the disgrace put upon him in the presence of his friends; and Bess hath been at the fair with the Lieutenant, and I know not what will happen. He is a revengeful man, Mr. Luke; and, unhappily, he is in love with Bess, and wants to marry her, a thing that, with my experience, I cannot understand. Well—it is a terrible thing, a terrible thing, for a peaceful man like me to have such a daughter. A humble man should pray for ugly daughters, who are also meek and obedient. They may wait for their beauty till they get to Heaven. I want nothing but peace, Mr. Luke, so that I may continue my studies in algebra and logarithms, for which end, and no other, unless it be the furtherance of goodly writing, I was sent into this troubled world.'

The next day I learned from Jack that he had taken Bess to every show at the fair; that he had given her as noble a supper as the place afforded; that he had fought and overthrown three fellows who waylaid them on the road home, and would have robbed him of his money as well as his fair charge; and that he safely convoyed her, about midnight, to her father's door. The Admiral heard of the evening's adventure, and laughed, saying that Bess was a lucky girl to get such a proper fellow to show her the fair. But I do not think that either Jack or the Admiral related the story of the fight, and the subsequent doings, to Madame and Castilla.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE SUMMER-HOUSE.

I AM a dull person in suspecting or guessing at passages of love. Yet I had seen Bess dragging her father to Horn Fair in order to witness the fight, and I marked the flash of triumph in her eyes when Aaron fell, and the unconcealed pleasure with which she accompanied the victor.

On Sunday morning, a day or two after the fair, another thing happened which ought to have made me suspect. It was in church. Soon after the service of Morning Prayer began I observed an unwonted agitation among the feminine part of the congregation, and presently discovered that the eyes of all were, with one consent, directed upon a certain seat in the north aisle, occupied by Bess Westmoreland and her father. The reason of this phenomenon was that Bess had come to church attired in a very fine new frock made of nothing less than sarcenet, with a flowered petticoat, a lawn kerchief about her neck, and a hat trimmed with silk ribbons, so that among the women around her in their scarlet flannel, and the girls in their plain camblet, linsey-woolsey, and russet, she looked like a rose among the weeds of the hedge. Few of the gentlewomen in the church were more finely dressed. As to them, their eyes plainly said, if eyes can speak, 'Saw one ever such presumption?' And as for the baser sort, they first gazed with admiration and envy unspeakable, and then sniffed and tossed their heads, as if nothing would have induced them to put on such fine things: and then they looked at each other, each with the same question trembling on her tongue, each one longing to ask aloud, 'Who gave her the things?' For there is some strange quality in the female conscience (I mean only in a seaport town), which enables every girl to accept joyfully and gratefully whatever a man may give her, and at the same time to flout and scorn all other girls for doing the same thing; so that what is a virtue in herself must be a clear sign of immodesty or forwardness in another.

One would not deny that the girl was worthy of blame; for, though there are no longer sumptuary laws, yet every woman knows how far she may in decency, and with due regard to her station, carry her love of finery. Bess, however, wore these things not of her own will, but by desire (say, rather, command) of a certain person. There is, again, nothing strange in a Deptford girl suddenly appearing in the colours of a rainbow, especially after a ship has been paid off, though very soon the silks and satins go to the Jews who buy second-hand clothes, together with the trinkets and the ribbons; and Madame returns to her russet frock, her blue apron, and her speckled handkerchief. But this, which is

of daily occurrence among the common sailors' wives, one would not expect of a respectable girl, such as Bess. It is quite certain, and one must not excuse her conduct, that she should not have ventured to church thus attired. Yet I, for one, was ready to forgive her—first because she looked so marvellously beautiful in these fine feathers, and next because she bravely bore the artillery of these eyes, and held herself tall and upright, looking straight before her, as if no one was gazing at her, and as if she wore what belonged to her. Women are your true levellers: they have no respect for rank: even a Peer is but a man to them, and a Countess is but a woman; they are ready to measure their own beauty beside that of any lady in the land; there is no girl, however lowly, who would refuse, for conscience' sake, the honourable attentions of a gentleman; and the silly creatures, I am told, whisper continually to each other tales of humble girls raised to the condition of Princesses.

There was another person in the church, besides myself, who seemed as if leniency and readiness to forgive this presumption possessed his heart as well. This was the Lieutenant, who, from his place in the Admiral's pew (the corner nearest the reading-desk, with his back to the altar), regarded the girl steadfastly during the whole service, insomuch that I feared lest Madame or Castilla herself should observe it, and be offended at so indecent a proof of admiration in Divine service. But Castilla did not discover it, partly because she hath never been able to understand how a gentleman can regard a common girl with admiration (she still considers that Jack's passion for Bess was caused by the sorcery and craft of Mr. Brinjes), and, therefore, was not likely to suspect such a thing; and partly because Castilla's eyes in church were always fixed upon her book, as she followed the words of the service, or they were humbly dropped upon her lap during the sermon, as if she closely followed the argument, and was being convinced by my father's reasoning. Now, as hath been already explained, the Vicar's sermons were written for the perusal of scholars rather than for the understanding of the unlearned.

The service over, we walked out in due order, and so by the gate into Church Lane, as we had done on that day, three weeks before, when our prodigal came home to us in rags. And then, after a little talk, we separated, Jack going with the Admiral's party, and I returning to the Vicarage to dinner.

After dinner, the afternoon being warm and sunny, I took my hat, and walked leisurely towards those gardens of which I have already spoken, where were the orchards of plum, pear, apple, and cherry, and where the old summer-house overlooked the Creek. It would be, I thought, pleasant in the gardens with no one but myself, and I could walk about among the trees, watching the grey lichen on the bark and the sober tints of the autumnal leaves, and perhaps find, in the view of the Greenwich Reach, something new to observe and note. One whose profession is to paint ships of all

kinds can never grow weary of watching them, whether at anchor or in motion; just as one who paints figures loves to be for ever contemplating the human figure, whether in action or in repose.

The air was still and soft, the day warm, although it was already the twentieth day of October. The fruit was all picked now, and the leaves beginning to dry at their stalks: because the leaves of apple, plum, and cherry do not turn brown, but drop off while they are yet green; yet the green is quite another hue than that presented in spring and summer, and I wonder that no painter has painted the greens of autumn, as well as the yellow, red, and brown. I have myself attempted a sketch, in April, showing parts of that long stretch of garden all the way from these gardens to Greenwich Hospital, which at that season look like a vast cloud of white and pink blossom resting on the green branches which here and there peep out.

This afternoon the tide was high. There was moored close to the mouth of the Creek, and on the opposite bank, a barge, which, with its brown sail lowered, its thick mast, and its hanging ropes, formed so pretty a set-off to the trees of the orchard beyond, that I stood awhile to gaze upon it. I have drawn many barges; below the bridge at Wapping Stairs, and in Chelsea Reach and in other places; but I never drew any prettier picture than that of the barge in the Creek at high tide, the woods behind it: only, as artists can, I made a change. For I presently sketched the barge, and waited until the following spring, when I painted a background of apple and cherry orchards in blossom.

Well, when I had looked at my barge and made a note of it, and of one or two other things, being in a leisurely mood, and quite certain that I was alone in the garden, I lifted the latch of the summer-house door and walked in.

I declare that I suspected nothing. If I had known who were in the place I should have beat a drum, or blown a trumpet, or fired a cannon to announce my approach, sooner than steal thus unawares upon them. But I did nothing, and pushed the door open without ceremony. Heavens! There was Bess Westmoreland, her head upon Jack's shoulder, while his hand clasped her waist, and his lips kissed her cheek! Who would have suspected this? I was so surprised that I stood speechless, I dare say with mouth wide open, as one sees on the stage, where gestures of all kinds are exaggerated. Yet not so amazed but I saw what a pretty picture they made, he in his blue coat and crimson sash, and his hat with the King's cockade: she in the pretty frock for which the women were now railing at her behind her back. A young man and a beautiful girl embracing cannot but make a pretty picture. As for this, I made a sketch in oils six months later. Bess stood to me for her portrait very willingly when I promised that the picture should be given to her sweetheart when he should return. As for the Lieutenant, I got a fellow, for a shilling or two, to stand in the attitude I wanted, while the face I drew from

memory, with the assistance of Bess. I painted them in the summer-house, and through the window you can see a ship slowly going down the river. For a reason, which you will presently learn, I never gave that picture to Jack; and, for my own reason, I have not sold it, but keep it hung up at home in my studio, though Castilla loves it not, and will never, if she can help it, look upon it—perhaps because the picture renders scant justice to the beauty of Bess, whose flushed cheeks, parted lips, and heaving bosom I endeavoured, but perhaps with insufficient success, to portray upon the canvas. Nor, I am aware, is justice done to the passion expressed in the lover's eyes, in his bending head—nay, even in the arms with which he held the nymph to his heart.

'Zounds!' cried Jack, as Bess screamed and started, and pushed him back, and sunk upon the bench, her face in her hands. 'Zounds and fury!' He stepped forward, his fists clenched, fire and distraction in his eyes. He was so carried away with his wrath that he did not at first even recognise me, and made as if he would draw his sword and make an end of me.

'Why, Jack,' I cried, 'I knew not thou wert here! How should I know?'

Upon this he let fly a round dozen or so of sailors' oaths, such as may be heard in Flagon Row or Anchorsmith Alley, sound and weighty oaths, every one more profane than its predecessor. The language of the fo'ks'le is, we know, readily and greedily acquired by every officer, and is too often adopted as his own to the end of his days.

'I knew not, Jack, indeed,' I repeated, 'that anyone was here. What? Should I spy on your actions? As for what I have seen——'

'Let me go, Jack!' cried Bess; 'oh, let me go! He will tell my father, who will send me away for a servant. And perhaps he will tell Aaron, who would murder you, if he could, without being hanged! Oh, Jack! what shall I do?'

'I shall tell no one, Bess,' I said. 'Why, it is no business of mine to go repeating what I have seen accidentally. Am I the town barber?'

Jack looked doubtfully; then he laughed.

'Cheer up, Bess,' he said; 'no harm is done. Luke will never betray an old friend. He came here to draw the ships, which is all he thinks about. He will go away, and he will forget all about it.'

'Nay,' I said; 'I shall not forget. But I shall hold my tongue.'

'I won't trust no one—only you, Jack,' said the girl.

'Hark ye, Luke.' Jack drew her closer to himself, and laid his arm round her neck. 'Hark ye, lad. Thou hast discovered what was not meant for thee—nor for anyone—to know. That signifies nothing for a lad of honour. But for Bess's sake, swear it. Take an oath upon it.

'I swear, Bess,' I declared to her, 'that I will speak no single word of what I have seen and learned. If there were a Bible here, I would kiss the book to please you. You may trust me, Bess.'

'You may indeed, Bess,' said Jack. 'Hands upon it, lad.'

So we shook hands, and in all that followed afterwards I told nobody what had happened; and the thing was so managed that it was never suspected by anyone except Aaron. It seems wonderful that no one in Deptford found it out, because it is a place where one half the women are continually employed in watching and spying upon the other half, and find their chief happiness in detecting things which it was desired to keep secret, forgetting that others are employed in exactly the same inquiry after their secrets. Just so one hath observed a row of monkeys in cages, each thieving from one neighbour's dish, while the other steals from his.

'Trust all or none, Luke,' said Jack. 'Thou shalt know all, and be a witness between us. Listen. I have told Bess that I love her, and that when I come home again I will marry her. If I had not fallen in love with so much beauty and loveliness I should have been a most insensate wretch, unworthy to be called a man. Was there ever a more charming nymph?' He kissed her again, while her great eyes swam with the pleasure of so much praise. 'Thou shalt paint her for me, Luke. And as for Bess, she says that she loves me. I believe she lies, because how such a girl, so soft and tender, can love a rough sea-bear like me, who knows none of the ways to please a woman, passes understanding. But she says she does, and I will question her farther upon this point when thy great ugly phiz is no more blocking up the gangway. And she will not believe that I am in earnest, Luke. That is my trouble with her. She will have that I shall go away and forget her, as many sailors do.'

'So he will,' said Bess. 'They all go away and forget the girls who loved them. And then I shall break my heart and die; if I don't, I shall hang myself.'

'So, Luke, listen and be a witness. What do I care who her father is? Such a girl deserves to be the daughter of a Commodore. Talk not to me of gentlewomen born. Where is there any woman, gentle or simple, with such eyes as Bess, such lips as Bess, such hair as Bess?' I declare he kept kissing her at each sentence, she making no manner of resistance. 'So I will swear to her, in thy presence, Luke, to make it more solemn, and to make her believe my word. I, Jack Easterbrook'—he took her hand at this point, as if he was actually marrying her in church, and by the minister or priest—'I, Jack Easterbrook, do solemnly promise and vow that I will never make love to any other woman and never marry any other woman than Bess Westmoreland; and that I will never think of any other woman at home or in foreign parts. First, I must get commissioned; and then, when the war is over, I will come back and marry my Bess.—Kiss me again, girl.—This is my solemn promise and oath, in which I will not fail, SO HELP ME, GOD!'

I have often, since that day, wondered at the amazing force of the passion which could make so young a man call down upon himself the awful vengeance of offended Omnipotence if he broke a vow of constancy towards a girl he had seen but twice or thrice; for I count as nothing the time when she was a child, and he came to her father for lessons.

As he spoke the last words his eyes grew dim with tenderness, and he stooped and kissed the girl on her forehead, as if to seal and consecrate the vow. As for her, she was transfigured. I could not believe that love could so powerfully change a woman's face. She had reason for triumph, but it was not triumph in her eyes; rather was it a kind of humble pride—a wondering joy that so gallant a man should love her, with a doubt whether it was not, after all, a passing fancy, and a fear that she should not fix his affections.

'Oh!' she sighed. 'Oh! Jack!' and could find no more words.

'Bess,' I said, 'vows ought not to be all on one side. If Jack promises so much, what hast thou to promise, in thy turn?'

'Tell me what to say. Oh! I am only a poor girl! What can I promise him? I am so ignorant that I do not know what to promise. Jack, do you want me to say that I will be faithful? No—you cannot. Why, is there any man in the world to compare with you? If a woman cannot be true and constant to you, she cannot be true to any man. As for the rest of them, I value not one of them a brass farthing. Oh!' she laughed and clasped her hands. 'Why, I am content to be his slave, Luke—yes, his slave, to toil and work for him all day long—his slave—his servant.' She fell on her knees before him. 'Oh! Jack, command me what you please. I want nothing more than to obey your orders.'

Wonderful it was how love made this ignorant and wilful girl at once eloquent and humble. Jack lifted her up, and held her by both hands.

'You are a King's officer, Jack,' she went on, speaking rapidly; 'I must try so that you shall not be ashamed of your wife. I am but the daughter of a Penman, I know. He writes letters for sailors, and teaches mathematics to midshipmen and young sailor officers, if there are any. But I have time to learn, and I will find out how to bear myself like a gentlewoman, and to talk like one, and to dress myself as a gentleman's wife ought to dress herself. I will make my father teach me to read and to write; and as for manners—I will go to Mr. Brinjes. He will do anything in the world for you, Jack, and for the woman of your choice.'

One could not choose but laugh at thinking of Mr. Brinjes as a teacher of polite manners and conversation. He had learned the most approved fashion, no doubt, among the Mandingoes and the Coromantyns. Yet the earnest and serious manner in which the girl spoke made the matter moving. However, enough was said, and I offered to go, but she caught me by the hand.

'Stay, Luke!' she whispered. 'Jack, some of you break your

vows; but you will not, Jack—you will not? As for me, I need not promise: for I cannot choose but be true to mine.'

She laid her head upon his breast, and I left them, shutting the door behind me, and going very softly.

In the evening I saw Jack again.

'Luke,' he said, 'I am the happiest man in the world, because I have got the best girl in the world. What do I care that her father is but a Penman? What does it signify that she cannot read or write? Reading does no good to any girl that ever I heard of, but fill her head with fond desires. But one thing sticks: when I am away, who will keep the men from her? There is Aaron Fletcher—him I knocked on the head; I wish I had beaten out his brains for him. They tell me he is mad for love of her, though she would never say a word to him. I doubt I may have to fight him again before I go. To be sure, Mr. Brinjes promises to protect her; but he is old and feeble.'

'Why,' I said, 'he will protect her by the fear with which he is regarded. One must needs respect a man who can scatter rheumatics among those who offend him.'

However, I presently promised him that, in his absence, I would sometimes visit the girl, and comfort her, and keep up her heart; although, if it came to a fight with Aaron, he was able to work me to an anvil, as they say, with fist or cudgel.

Then I begged him to consider seriously what he was about to do. First, that he was a gentleman by birth and rank, who might look to marry a gentlewoman; next, that he had no fortune, and as yet no prize-money, and only a Lieutenant's half-pay; and lastly, that if he married, he was likely to lose the Admiral's favour.

'Truly,' he replied, 'I have considered all these things.' I don't believe that he had considered one of them before that moment. 'And I am resolved that there is no other happiness but in marrying Bess. As for duty, it points the same way, because I am promised to her. When duty and inclination point the same way, my lad, what room is there left for doubt? Answer me that. Why, if I lived a thousand years, I should never love any other woman as I love my Bess. What puzzles me,' he went on, 'is why the landsmen haven't fallen in love with her long ago. None of your mincing, mealy-mouthed, fine ladies, all patches and powder, made up so that you know not what they are like, with hoop and petticoat; but an honest lass, true and loyal—you can see what she is like, for she wears neither hoop nor powder; and she tells no lies, and you know her mind directly she speaks. That is the girl for me, Luke. Hang me if I understand why she wasn't, long ago, the girl for you.'

'Fortunately for me,' I said, 'your inclinations and mine are not set on the same woman.'

'Why, if I had been in your place, Luke, I would have carried off the girl, if I could have got her in no other way.

If she were to change her mind now, and to refuse me, I would carry her off, whether she liked it or not. There would be a prize to tow into port, and all for myself, Luke—all for myself!'

CHAPTER XVII.

IN BUTCHER'S ROW.

'Aaron,' Mr. Westmoreland said, 'is a cruel and revengeful man.

Afterwards I remembered these words. For my own part I did not understand this judgment, though I had known Aaron all my life, first as a great hulking boy, and then as the strongest and biggest man in Deptford. On what grounds did Mr. Westmoreland consider him cruel and revengeful? The judgments of weak and timid men, like those of women, are shrewd, and often true. Yet Aaron had done nothing, so far as the world knew, on account of which he could be called cruel and revengeful. Masterful and headstrong he was, and the world accounted him a brave man, but not revengeful. The present moment, however, was likely to bring out whatever evil passions lay in his soul, for he had been publicly humiliated and brought to shame by the man who had taken from him the woman he loved; and when he met his friends in the street they seemed to be laughing in their sleeves at him. Therefore Aaron conceived an act of revenge which was as audacious as it was villainous. If he was revengeful, it must be admitted that he was also bold.

He first showed his teeth on the Monday morning after the fight at Horn Fair. Bess was engaged in making a beef-steak pudding for dinner, her sleeves rolled up, singing over her work. Her father sat at his desk before the window, bent over his work, with round spectacles on nose, undisturbed by his daughter's singing. A sudden diminution of the light caused both to look up. Aaron Fletcher's great body was blocking up the doorway.

'Bess,' he said, roughly, 'come out to me.'

'Good morning, Aaron,' said Mr. Westmoreland. 'The weather still holds up, and keeps fine for the season.'

'Come out, Bess,' he repeated, taking no notice of her father.

'What do you want to say to me, Aaron? If it is the old thing——'

'No; it is not the old thing. Come out, I say.'

She obeyed, rolling her apron over her bare arms, and came out into the street; her father looking after her, apprehensive of mischief.

'Well, Aaron?'

He looked upon her with love in his eyes, had she been able to perceive it, and to be moved by such a gaze. But she had no pity for him, and no feeling.

'It is not the old story, Bess,' he said. 'As for that, I've had

my answer. What I came to say was this. I asked a simple question—twenty times I asked that question. 'Twas not only by reason of thy good looks, Bess, though they go for something. 'Twas because, of all the Deptford girls, there was none so quiet and so steady. Well, the time has come when no honest man will ask thee that question again.'

'Have a care, Aaron,' she replied, with flaming cheek, because she knew what he meant very well. 'Have a care, Aaron. You'd best.'

'Bess, it is because I love thee still that I came to say this. No one else will say it, though they may all think it. You were with him at the fair all the evening. It was not till nigh upon midnight that he brought thee home. Is that an hour for a respectable girl? You meet him secretly at the apothecary's every day. Therefore I say again, Bess—beware.'

'Oh! If I were to tell him,' she began, 'if I were only to tell him what you have dared to say!'

'Nay . . . tell him all. I care not a brass button. Tell him I said he is fooling thee. I will tell him that to his face. What care I for any Lieutenant of them all? He to marry! Why, he has got nothing. He is fooling thee. Mischief will come of it, Bess. Thou art too low for him, and yet too high.'

'Thank you for your pains,' she replied. 'As for me, I can take care of myself, even if all the world should take to spying through keyholes. As for trusting myself with the Lieutenant, I think I am safer with him than with a smuggler—yes, a mere tarpaulin smuggler. You can go, Aaron. 'Tis a fine morning for a run down the river, and I dare say a sail across the Channel will do you good, and cure the headache from last Friday's cudgelling; but take care, Aaron. Some day, perhaps, we may see thee, if thou art not prudent, dangling in chains over there'—she pointed to the Isle of Dogs, where there were then hanging on the gibbets three poor wretches—'or walking after a cart-tail with the whip across your shoulders; or, maybe, marched aboard ship in handcuffs for the plantations. Get thee gone, meddler!'

'I have said what I came to say. As for thy fine lover, Bess, he crows now, but it will be my turn next, and that when he little looks for it. He has not yet done with me.'

She laughed scornfully, and returned to her pudding, tossing her head, and murmuring with wrath that bubbled and boiled over into broken words, insomuch that her father trembled.

As for Aaron, he stood still for a moment, looking wistfully after the girl. I think he bore no malice on account of the joy with which she witnessed his downfall—nay, I verily believe that this morning he meant the best for her, and only mistrusted the Lieutenant. Then he turned and walked slowly towards the town.

Everybody knows that there are streets in Deptford where honest and sober people would not willingly be seen. They are the resort

of the vile creatures which infest every seaport town, and rob the sailor of his money. Barnes Alley, French Fields, and the Stowage are full of these people, the best of whom are oyster wenches, ballad-singers, and traders in smuggled goods. The houses are chiefly of wood, black with dirt; every other door hangs out the chequers as a sign of what is sold within. Here and there may be seen the lattice of the baker or the pole of the barber. The men in these streets wear for the most part fur caps, with grey woollen stockings, and speckled breeches. Their shoes are tied with scarlet tape, and they are never without a cudgel. The women have flat caps, blue aprons, and draggled petticoats. The talk of the people corresponds to their appearance. One of these streets is called Butcher's Row. In the midst of it, on the north side, stands a house superior to the rest, having an upper storey, and a sign carved in wood over the door—that of the 'Hope and Anchor.' There is a broad staircase within, also rich with wood carving, and a room wainscoted with dark oak, where those sit who drink something better than the common twopenny.

Every tavern hath its own class of frequenters: those who use the 'Hope and Anchor' are the men whom Custom House officers, the clerks of the Navy Offices, and police magistrates agree in regarding with suspicion. They are, for instance, men who have dealings with smugglers, yet never venture their skins across the Channel; men who traffic in sailors' tickets, and defraud sailors' wives of their pay; men who sell ship-stores of all kinds, and are modestly reluctant to show where they got them; men who buy up, before the Navy Office is ready to pay, sailors' prize-money; those who live by finding recruits for the East India Company's service, and keep crimps' houses, where, according to common report, murder is as common as drunkenness and theft.

Into that house, therefore, Aaron walked, and without any questions, for he knew the place, made his way into the parlour, where was sitting a man who, to judge by his friendly greeting, expected him. He was in an arm-chair before the fireplace, where, though it was a sunny day and warm for the season, a great coal fire was burning. He was provided with a tankard of small ale and a pipe of tobacco, though it was still the forenoon, when industrious men have not begun to think of tobacco. In appearance he was about fifty years of age; his cheeks were purple and his eyes were fiery; his neck was swollen; as for his nose, it was battered in the bridge, so that the original shape of it could no longer be guessed. And there was a deep red scar across his cheek, which might be a glorious proof of valour in some great action, and might also be a mark by which to remember some midnight brawl. He wore a scratch wig and a brown coat with metal buttons, worsted stockings, and a muffler about his neck.

This man was a familiar figure in Deptford, whither he came by boat once a month or so for the transaction of business. The nature of his business was not known for certain, and there were

different reports. It was whispered that he stood in with Aaron Fletcher, receiving and selling for him those cargoes of his which he brought across the Channel and landed on the coast of Essex; by others it was said that he ventured on his own account; and again, it was reported that he was a Government spy, who ought to have his ears sliced; and by others that he procured information for the Navy Office when there was going to be a Press, and therefore, if justice was done, should be carbonadoed. All this might have been true. What everyone could observe with his own eyes was—that he bought, and paid a good price for, all those things which sailors bring with them from foreign ports, such as embroidered cloths, brass pots, figures in china, silver ornaments and idols, or even living creatures, as hyenas, wolves, monkeys, parrots, mongooses, lemurs, and the like. He was liberal with his money, and generous in the matter of drink; yet he was not regarded with friendly eyes, perhaps on account of that suspicion regarding the Navy Office and the Press. As for his name, it was Jonathan Rayment.

He nodded his head when Aaron appeared at the door, and, lifting the tankard, drank to him in silence.

'How goes business?' asked Aaron.

'Business,' Mr. Rayment replied, mournfully, 'was never worse. Honest merchants are undone. My next ship sails in a week, and as yet I have but a poor half-dozen in the place.'

'That is bad.'

'And a sorry lot they are. One is a young parson who has spent his all, and, in despair, took one night to the road, and now thinks the Hue and Cry is out after him. Another is a 'prentice who hath robbed his master's till, and will be hanged if he is caught, and yet snivels all day because he fears the Great Mogul's black Spahis almost more than he fears the gallows. One hath deserted twenty-one times from the Army, twice from the Navy, and once from the Marines, but a dissolute fellow, and rotten with disease and drink; the wind whistles through his bones. Yet he would rather cross the seas and fight for the Honourable Company than be taken, and receive the five hundred lashes which are waiting for him. He might as well die that way as by disease, for he will certainly drop to pieces before he reaches Calcutta. Another is a lawyer's clerk, who, I believe, hath forged his master's name—a rogue who will fight, though small of stature. Another is a footpad, for whose apprehension ten guineas reward is offered, and so mean and chicken-hearted a rascal that I must e'en give up the fellow and content myself with the reward. Sure I am that the first smell of powder will kill him. A sorry lot, indeed. Well, if the war continues, I am ruined. For every lusty fellow can now find employment, either in a regiment or on board a ship, and there will soon be no debtors or footpads. Alas! Aaron, I remember, not so long ago, when the peace was proclaimed, and the regiments disbanded, and the ships paid off. Then we had for nothing our

choice of the best. Rogues are cheap when 'tis their only choice between the gallows and the Company.'

The meaning of all this was that the respectable Mr. Rayment was nothing more nor less than a crimp by trade: one, that is, who seeks out and deludes, inveigles, or persuades recruits for the service of the East India Company, whether for their land or sea service, keeping them snug in the house till the ship sails. As regards their navy, the Company hath, I have been told, a fleet of a hundred ships afloat, to man which is difficult, and requires the service of many such men as Mr. Rayment, whose methods are, as is well known, to decoy or persuade young men, and especially young men who are friendless or in trouble through some folly or crime, into their houses, and there keep them, whether they will or no, by violence if necessary, but more often by keeping them continually drunk, so that they know not what they have undertaken, or what papers they have signed, until the time comes when they can be put aboard. As for the service of the Company, the young gentlemen who are sent out by the Honourable Council to Calcutta or Madras as writers or clerks, do frequently, as everybody knows, arrive at great riches, and come home nabobs. But I never yet heard that any of the poor fellows who have been decoyed into the crimps' houses, and shipped on board an East Indiaman for foreign service in the Company, have ever returned at all, rich or poor.

Between Aaron and this man there was some understanding or partnership, but of what nature, or to what extent, I have not learned. Rayment had a shop in Leman Street (quite apart from the houses in which he kept his recruits), where he sold many things besides the curiosities which he bought of the sailors in Wapping and Poplar, as well as at Deptford. Perhaps he disposed of Aaron's cargoes for him after a run. Perhaps he arranged, with Aaron's help, for the passage of those gentlemen, whether Jacobites or Frenchmen, who are anxious to get backwards and forwards between England and France without the observation or the knowledge of the Government of either country. There is abundant occupation for such gentry as Mr. Rayment, whose end is often what rogues call a dance in the air. And just as Aaron had his boatbuilding yard, which is a most innocent and harmless business, so Mr. Rayment had his innocent shop in Leman Street, and was to outward seeming an honest citizen, who went forth from his shop to church on Sunday morning, dressed in black cloth, white silk stockings, and japanned shoes, with a newly curled and powdered wig, like the best of them, and was permitted to exchange the time of day and the compliments of the season with gentlemen of reputation and known piety. Thus may villains walk unsuspected among honest men.

'Well,' said Aaron, 'I dare say you will not starve. What do you say, now, to a tall recruit?'

'What do you want for him, Aaron?'

'You shall have him for nothing.'

Mr. Rayment looked suspicious, as one that feareth the gifts of his friends, and shook his head.

'For nothing, Aaron? What do you want me to do for you, then?'

'Nothing. I will give you a tall and lusty recruit. That is plain, is it not?'

'The door is shut, Aaron. Tell me what you mean.'

'Give me the men to take him, and he is yours.'

'To take him?' Mr. Rayment leaned forward and whispered, 'Is he not a willing recruit, then? I love a fellow who is in trouble, and desires to be put into a place of safety.'

'I don't know about his willingness,' said Aaron, grimly.

'If he is not willing, is he a fellow to be persuaded easily? As far as a skinful of punch is concerned, I care not about the expense, as long as I get a lusty fellow.'

'He is in no trouble, and he is not willing. It will take half a dozen men to carry him along, and a week's starvation to make him even pretend to be willing.'

''Tis dangerous, Aaron. I like not this kidnapping work. We crimps have got a bad name, though everyone knows my own honesty. Yet we must not openly rival the Press.'

'Why, you have done it hundreds of times.'

'Ay, for the picking up of a starving rustic, or a drunken sailor, or a disbanded soldier, and swearing, when they are sober again, that they have enlisted: that is neither here nor there. And it is for the good of the poor fellows. Their pay is regular, and the climate considered by some to be wholesome. It is playing the part of Providence to help the poor men with the service of the East India Company.'

'No doubt,' said Aaron.

'Give me your recruit who comes red-handed, the runners after him, and asks for nothing but to be shipped safe out of the country as soon as possible. I care not how many rogueries he hath committed. Give me your lusty villain, who hath stolen his master's horse; or the gallant who hath squandered all his stock. These give no trouble. But with pressed and kidnapped men it is different.'

'I doubt if you could persuade this fellow,' said Aaron, 'not if you made him drink a cask of brandy.'

'We have had misfortunes, too,' Mr. Rayment continued. 'Only last May there was brought to my house as sweet a country lad as you would desire to see. He was in trouble about a girl, and desired to serve the King. Well, in the morning, when he got sober, and learned that he was enlisted in the service of the Company, he behaved shamefully. Nothing would do but he must go free or fight for it. So my honest fellows tried persuasion, and in the end there were collar-bones and ribs broken, and that country lad was carried out and laid upon Whitechapel Mount, stripped,

and as dead as any gentleman can wish to be. Think of the loss it was to me.'

'Well,' said Aaron, 'your fellows must not persuade my man this way.'

'What does it mean, Aaron?'

'It is a private matter. You need not have anything to do with it. Send me half a dozen stout fellows, and you shall know nothing at all about it, except that another recruit was enlisted, who stayed at the house till the ship sailed, and was taken on board drunk and speechless. You will have nothing to do with it but to lend me your men and your house.'

'I don't like it, Aaron. It may turn out bad. Has the man friends?'

'He has. Yet this his friends will never suspect.'

'I don't like the job, Aaron. Kidnapping should only be practised on strangers and rustics. Is he a tradesman?'

'No. It is a private grudge, Jonathan. I will make it worth your while. I must have this man put out of the way. He is a Lieutenant in the King's Navy.'

Mr. Rayment jumped from his chair.

'A King's Lieutenant! Aaron, would you hang us all!'

'Sit down, you fool. It is a safe job. Besides, you shall have nothing to do with it. Sit down, and listen.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DARK NIGHT'S JOB.

The evenings, towards the end of October, set in early; and when there is no moon, the nights are as dark as in mid-winter. It is, therefore, a favourable season for the footpads who molest the roads outside great towns, the thieves who prowl the streets, and the highwaymen who stop the coaches. At Deptford there are neither footpads nor street-prowlers, though robbers enough, Lord knows; but they rob, for the most part, on a different plan, and within the houses. In times of peace, when a sailor cannot readily find a ship, or a disbanded Marine cannot find work, there have been known cases of robbery about Deptford and Greenwich. But in such a year as 1756, when the sailors were all too few for the King's ships, and they were continually enrolling new regiments of Marines, no one in these towns gave a thought to the dangers of footpads, and a child might have carried, by day or by night, a bag full of guineas from the dockyard gate to the bridge, without fear of molestation. Least of all would such a man as Jack Easterbrook trouble his head about robbers.

He left the Gun Tavern, where he had spent the evening with the Lieutenants and Midshipmen who used the house, at a quarter before ten or thereabouts, carrying no other weapon than his hanger,

and began leisurely to walk home down Church Lane. The upper part of this road, when you have passed the church and the Trinity Almshouses, is darker than the lower part, by reason of great trees and a high hedge on either hand. Light or dark, 'twas all the same to Jack, who marched along the middle of the road, head in air, his thoughts turned on Bess, as they commonly were at this time, or else wondering how long before he should receive his promised commission. Soon it certainly would be, even though, through favouritism and lack of interest, he should, for the present, be passed over, because officers and men were growing scarce, and my Lords the Commissioners wanted all they could get. And once afloat again, with, if kind Heaven willed, a fighting Captain, there would be prizes and prize-money, and, perhaps, swift promotion. And then home again, to the arms of his dear girl. This, I take it, is the dream of every sailor; whereas, for many, instead of returning to the arms of a fond mistress, they are lowered, with a cannon-shot at their heels, into the cold ocean, or come home lopped of half their limbs, only to find their inconstant mistress in another's arms.

Now, as he was thus striding along, swinging his arms as he went, he became suddenly aware of shuffling footsteps and whispers, which betoken the presence of men lurking behind the trees; but before he had time to ask himself what this might mean, a fellow rushed out from the darkness, armed with a pistol in one hand, which he pointed at Jack's head, and a lantern in the other, which he turned, unsteadily in the manner of one who is afraid, upon his face, crying, 'Your money or your life!'

Jack was so astonished that, for a moment, he made no reply. Then he sprang upon the fellow, and caught him by the throat. 'My money or my life? Impudent dog, I will squeeze thine own life out!' and so shook him in his grasp—thumb on breathing-pipe—as a terrier shakes a rat, that the man dropped pistol and lantern, and would have experienced the fate of the rat in another minute but for the help of his friends. As it was, he would have cried for mercy, but he could neither cry out nor breathe, so tight were the fingers at his throat. Indeed, when he was rescued, half a minute later, his face was already purple, his eyes starting from his head like a shrimp's, and his tongue swollen, so that he was fain to sit upon the ground awhile; and, for ten minutes or so, he knew not whether he were really dead and in the next world, and therefore about to reap the reward of his many villainies, or whether he were still living and ready, for his greater damnation, to swell that long list.

When the light of the lantern fell upon Jack's face, there followed a sharp short whistle; and, upon that signal, half a dozen lusty fellows sprang upon him at the same moment from both sides of the road. He had no time to draw his sword or to make any resistance of any kind, for one of them fetched him from behind, while the others threatened him in front, so foul a stroke with an

oaken cudgel that he fell like a log, and without a word, senseless upon the ground, dragging with him the man whom he held by the throat.

Then the men all crowded over him ready with their cudgels, and as courageous as you please, their man being down. But it is of no use to cudgel a senseless man.

They were joined by another man—it was Aaron—a tall fellow, truly. He seemed like a giant among these ruffians, who, after the kind of riverside villains, were short of stature, though stout. This man stood over the fallen Lieutenant and looked upon the prostrate body with eyes of satisfaction.

'He fell at once,' said Aaron, as if dissatisfied. 'I looked for more fighting. I thought there would be much more fighting. I hoped to see him do his best before he was overpowered. Show a light here.' One of them—not the first villain, who was now sitting on the ground slowly getting his breath and still wondering whether he were dead or not—held the lantern before Jack's face. The eyes were closed and his cheek white.

'Master,' said the man, 'I doubt the gentleman is killed outright. This is a bad job for all of us.'

'Killed! Saw ever one a man killed by a stroke of a cudgel? I wish he was killed. I wish he was dead and buried. Yet he shall never say that I caused him to be killed. Such a man as this does not die of a cracked skull. Show the light again.'

This time he looked more carefully. The Lieutenant was in a dead swoon, just as Aaron himself had fallen into at Horn Fair, but it was a far shrewder knock and a deeper faint. Aaron raised an eyelid, but there was no sign of life or any shrinking from the light. And now he saw that blood was flowing from the wound.

'He will lie quiet for a while yet. Well, men, here is your new recruit.'

The men looked at each other, and murmured that with King's officers—for now they saw the uniform by the light of the lantern—they would not meddle.

'Not meddle, ye villains?' cried Aaron; 'why, you have meddled with him already, and have well-nigh murdered him, and will very likely hang, every mother's son, for this night's job. Wherefore take him up and carry him away; 'tis your only chance to save your own necks. Get him across the river with all despatch, and snug indoors.'

The men hesitated. One of them murmured, with an oath, that they would not hang alone.

'When he comes to his senses,' Aaron continued, taking no notice of this threat, 'tell him that at the least movement you will brain him. But you are not to brain him, remember, or your master will lose the very best recruit he ever had, and will cause you all to swing. What? There is enough against you for every man to swing.' This assurance was made more emphatic by the language which this sort most readily understood. Still the men

hesitated. The King's uniform frightened them. They had often enough kidnapped a poor drunken sailor, but never before a Lieutenant. Then Aaron swore at them, and stamped his foot upon the ground.

'Quick, I say. What? You dare to argue? Take him up. So. Cover him with a jacket to hide his white stockings and breeches, though the night is dark. That will do—now—with a will.'

They took him up, the whole six sullenly lending a hand, and carried him as men carry a drunken man.

'Carry him to the Stairs, and row him across the river as quickly as you may. Bestow him in the upper room at the back, where you keep the chains and the bars for your unruly recruits. Watch him by day and night. He will try to escape, that is certain; as soon as he recovers consciousness he will try to escape. Let him understand that he will be knocked on the head if he makes the attempt. And, remember, he is a match for any three of ye—ay, the whole six, I verily believe—for he is as strong as Samson. If he succeeds in escaping he will have you all in Newgate. He will drag the house down, if he can, in order to escape. You are in great danger, my friends, whatever happens. Yet I would not have him murdered. If he is not put on board alive, there will be a warrant out against you for highway robbery and violence, and hanged you will be, every man. Therefore, I say, take care of him.' Thus he spoke: now showing that he wished the man dead, and then warning them not to kill him. 'It is but three or four days' nursing, with chains and a watch set day and night, and then you shall hocus his drink and put him on board, and shove the drunken beast down the companion to the lower deck with the recruits, and the bo's'n's rope's-end first, in case he complains; and the triangles next, in case he is stubborn and mutinous. I should like to see him tied up for three dozen. Now, march.'

The men replied nothing, but slung their burden and prepared to obey.

'March, I say; and, look ye, the Press was last night out on Tower Hill, and the night before they were busy at Redriff, where there was fighting and warm work, so that the men's spirit is up and they will brook no resistance. Perhaps—I know not—they are out to-night at Deptford. If the Press should take you, carrying a King's officer unconscious and with an open wound in his head, my mates—why, you are dead men, and already little better.'

The men needed no more, but marched off at the double, as they say, the thought of the Press lending wings to their heels.

'To knock down,' said Aaron, when they were gone, 'and to kidnap a Lieutenant in the King's Navy, and to ship him, drugged and drunk, on board an East Indiaman for a recruit, is, I should say high treason, at the least. But none of the fellows know me, and who is to prove that I gave the orders? If the Lieutenant is dead already, they will throw his body into the river. If he is not

dead, most of these poor fellows will surely hang, for one or other of them is certain to turn King's evidence. Yet, if he tries to escape they will kill him, being used to murder, and thinking little of it. If they knew it, this is their best chance. If they do not kill him—what then? He goes aboard. And then? I know not. He will be put on board in rags. No one will believe him if he calls himself an officer. I doubt if the Lieutenant will come back again to Deptford. Whether he comes back or not, they cannot charge the thing on me.'

Certainly, there never yet was conceived a more diabolical plot, or one of greater impudence, than to waylay and kidnap an officer bearing His Majesty's commission, to keep him close prisoner in a crimp's house, chained and half starved, watched day and night, and then, as was intended, to thrust him down into the hold of an East Indiaman, seemingly stupid with drink (but in reality bereft of his senses by some noxious drug), and to pretend that he was a volunteer recruit. It is very well known, and matter of common notoriety, that many men have been thus kidnapped and kept prisoners and then shipped under this pretence. They are carried below, apparently drunk, and laid among the other recruits, for the most part a most desperate, villainous company. Here they lie, and when they partly recover they are already out to sea, in the gloomy 'tween-decks, most likely speechless with sea-sickness, among strange and horrible companions, and no one on board who will so much as listen to their story. Here was revenge indeed, if only it could be carried out! And what was to prevent? I have never heard that a King's officer hath been thus treated, which makes it the more wonderful for Aaron to have devised so bold a scheme. Yet not so bold as it seems, because, if Jack could thus be carried on board, in rags, unwashed, unshaven, his hair about his ears, who would believe his affirmation that he was a commissioned officer? Why, if such a ragamuffin told this tale to the petty officers he would be rope's-ended, and if to the First Lieutenant or to the Captain himself, he would most likely be tied up and accommodated with three dozen, or perhaps six dozen, for insubordination; for the officers of the Company are said to be ready as those of the King's service—who, Heaven knows, are never too lenient—in dealing with refractory recruits. Yet sooner or later, one would think, the thing would be discovered; though not on board the ship. Then the Lieutenant would return home and prefer his complaint, and punishment would follow. But Aaron, only an ignorant fellow, thought of nothing but revenge. There are some men to whom the most terrible punishment in the future seems as nothing compared with the gratification of present revenge.

The gang of rogues had not gone farther towards the town than St. Paul's Church, marching quickly along the middle of the road, ready at the least alarm of the Press to drop their burden and to run in all directions, when they encountered another party, con-

sisting of three negroes—one carrying a lantern—and a gentleman with a wooden leg. The negroes were, like these villains, armed with cudgels, but they also carried cutlasses.

'Halt!' cried the gentleman, who was none other than the Admiral. 'Turn the lantern on these men, Cudjo.'

The negro valiantly advanced and showed a light upon the party. They wore sailors' clothes—namely, slops or petticoats, short jackets, and hats turned up straight on all three sides: and their hair was long, and hung about their necks. It was, indeed, their business on the Tower Hill, and in the neighbourhood of Ratcliffe, Shadwell, and Wapping, to pretend to be honest sailors, and therefore to wear their dress.

'Why,' said the Admiral, 'they are sailors! Whither bound, my lads, and what are you carrying?'

'By your leave, your Honour,' said one of them, 'we are carrying a comrade who is too drunk to walk, and we are fearful of leaving him in the hedge-side by reason of the Press.'

'Ay . . . ay . . . the Press. Well—my lads, I would that the Press could take you all, and confound you for a poor lousy chicken-hearted crew. I wish I knew where the Press is this night, that I might set them on to you. I wish my negroes were six instead of three. Go your ways.—March, Cudjo.'

The men made no reply, but hurried away as quickly as they could. The Admiral looked after them awhile.

'I doubt,' he said, 'that all was not right. They looked a plaguey cut-throat set of rascals. Perhaps 'twas not a drunken comrade after all.'

Then he continued his way home in the usual marching order, but slowly, because a wooden-legged man, who has twinges of gout in his remaining toes, does not walk fast. Presently, the man who held the lantern spied something in the road which glittered. He picked it up. 'Twas a gold-laced hat with the King's cockade.

'Men,' said the Admiral, 'this is the hat of an officer. What does this mean? Look about you, every one.'

The road was quite dark, owing to the trees and the cloudy night. Presently, however, the men found a pistol in the road, and, beside it, the traces of scuffling feet and torn lace, and, worse still, plain marks of blood upon the road.

'Here,' said the Admiral, 'hath been wild work. Torn ruffles—a gold-laced hat—a pistol—and a gang of bloodthirsty cut-throats carrying a body with them. A drunken comrade, forsooth! And afraid of the Press; would to God the Press might take them red-handed! Whom have they murdered? For murder, surely, it is, and nothing less. Men'—he turned to his negroes—'I am wooden-legged, and cannot run. Wherefore, do you leave me here, and with what speed you may, hasten after that company, and call upon them to surrender; and, if they will not, raise the town upon them. Draw cutlasses—shoulder cutlasses—quick march—double.

Run, ye black devils, as if your horny grandfather himself was after you!'

If the Admiral had ordered his negroes to jump from London Bridge or the Monument they would have done it, I am quite certain, so great was the terror with which they regarded him. Therefore, at the word, they drew their weapons, and set off running with the greatest resolution, and at a pretty brisk pace, showing all the outward signs of zeal and of courage.

Alas! negroes are in essentials all alike. No man ever yet found courage in the black African, any more than industry, patience, or honesty, unless the white man was behind him with Father Stick for encouragement.

The night was dark. Nothing more daunts a negro than darkness, because to him the night is peopled—especially when there is no white man present—with all kinds of fearful and terrible creatures; therefore, in their running, they presently began to feel the gloomy influence of the hour, and their speed slackened gradually. Next, they were no longer young; and it would be foolish to expect of those whose wool is grey the courage which they never possessed when it was still black. Thirdly, the Admiral was out of sight and out of hearing. And, again, if the enemy refused to surrender, whom were they to alarm? What were they to say? What road were they to take? Lastly—a consideration which weighed with them above all others—what if they were, unhappily, to overtake the men? They were but three to six—and three feeble old blacks to six lusty young whites! Then might occur difficulties unforeseen by the Admiral, who naturally thought that his own crew must always gain the victory.

These doubts and difficulties suggested themselves to the brave fellows at one and the same moment—namely, the first moment when they thought their footsteps out of the Admiral's hearing. They halted and looked at each other.

'Breddren,' said Snowball, 'let us stop and deliberation ourselves. Where am de enemy? Fled—flown—yah! De poo' coward!—run clean out ob our sight!—'fraid to face brave black man!'

'S'pose,' said Cudjo, 'we wait just quarter ob an hour; den go back and tell his Honour men clean gone; run away before us, for fear ob us?'

This was agreed to. Nothing more was said, but all three sat on a doorstep and waited until they thought the quarter of an hour seemed to be passed, and so they might safely return.

Even if they had followed the party across to the Stairs, supposing they knew which direction to take, they would scarcely have overtaken them, so expeditious were the men in getting to the river and in pushing off, the bank being at this time quite deserted.

Therefore, when a reasonable time had elapsed, the valiant negroes began to return slowly, but still brandishing their cutlasses. Arrived within five minutes of the house, they broke

into a quick trot, so that they reached the doors in a panting and breathless condition, as happens to those who very earnestly and zealously carry out instructions.

They reported that at the bottom of Church Lane they came upon the enemy, and called upon him to surrender at discretion or take the terrible consequences. The enemy chose the latter, and retreated rapidly. In other words, they all vanished, but whether down Butcher's Row or in the direction of Rogue Lane, which leads into the open fields south of Rotherhithe, they could not tell, and, in the darkness and uncertainty, they thought it best to return for further orders.

'Why,' said the Admiral, 'tis a dark night, truly. And if they have sailed out of sight, and we have lost them, there is no more to be said,' and so put away the torn ruffles, the laced hat, and the pistol, in case they might be wanted for evidence of robbery and violence, if not of murder, and ordered the men an extra ration of rum, and so to bed. Fortunately, he had no suspicion that the hat and the ruffles belonged to Jack Easterbrook, otherwise his night's rest would have been disturbed. As for the pistol, however, that, he discovered on examination, had not been discharged.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE CRIMP'S HOUSE.

Mr. Jonathan Rayment was not only a crimp (though at his shop in Leman Street they knew not this, and in his houses they knew not his name), but he was a crimp in a large way of business, as they say of honest trades, being the possessor of half a dozen houses in different parts of London, all kept for no other purpose than the receiving of recruits for the East India Company. There is no concealment about this business; everybody knows that they are crimps' houses. One of them was in High Street, Wapping; one in Chancery Lane; a third in Butcher Row, at the back of St. Clement's Church; and another in Tothill Fields. He employed a good many men to decoy and entrap his prey. Some among them went dressed soberly, like substantial citizens, or in scarlet, like half-pay captains, and frequented the gaming-houses, where they made the acquaintance of those who were driven to despair by losing all; some haunted the coffee-houses, taverns, theatres, and mughouses. Here they picked up young countrymen who had run through their money, 'prentices who had robbed their masters, and even young gentlemen of quality who had wasted their substance in riotous living, and now saw nothing before them but a debtors' prison. Others, again, worked chiefly in the neighbourhood of Wapping and the town, being always on the look-out for rustics and labouring men out of work, disbanded soldiers, paid-off sailors, men discharged for misconduct,

and rogues in hiding. These they either bought or entrapped; and sometimes, when they could not persuade, they hesitated not to kidnap. It was from this gang that the six fellows came who assaulted Jack.

When they got to the river side, still running at the double, being horribly afraid of the Press, and knowing not whether they might encounter the gang face to face, they made all haste to deposit their charge in the boat, and rowed off. Presently the cold air playing on Jack's bare head began to revive him, and he half opened his eyes and began to collect his senses. Fortunately, the men paid no attention to him, or it might have been all over with him. At first he understood nothing except that he was in a boat, but on what water he knew not. Next he understood that the men were rowing up stream. And so, little by little, some knowledge of what happened came to him, and he wondered whither they were taking him, and why he was thus treated. He understood, that is to say, that he had been attacked, and perhaps robbed, and that he had been in a swoon. More he knew not. 'No voyage,' he told me afterwards, 'ever seemed longer to me than this three-quarters of a mile from Deptford to King Edward's Stairs. And I knew not whether to rejoice or to tremble when the men shipped oars and the boat's bows struck the stairs.' The event was doubtful, and only one thing certain—namely, that he was in hands which meant no good to him; that he had been knocked silly for a time, and was still incapable of making resistance; that it was growing late, and good people were abed; and that he had been conveyed to the other side of the river, where honest people are scarce. For all these reasons he resolved upon continuing senseless as long as possible. If, he thought, it had been intended to kill him, why had they not done so right out? Why had they not tumbled him into the river? Why had they taken all the trouble of carrying him to the river side and so across the water if they were going to kill him? And if not, what were they going to do with him?

King Edward's Stairs, whither they brought him, are the next but one, going down the river, to Execution Dock. These stairs are at no time in the day so well frequented as Wapping Old Stairs and Wapping New Stairs, higher up, or Shadwell Stairs, lower down. After dark, they are for the most part deserted, or simply used by the river pirates and night plunderers for the landing of the booty they have gotten from ships and barges. On this night there were no watermen on the stairs, and only, at the head, clustered together for warmth, under a penthouse, which would keep off rain, if not wind and cold, half a dozen of the miserable boys who pick up their living in the mud of the river, and are called mudlarks or ratcatchers. When they grow up, they may perhaps become lumpers or scuffle-hunters, if they are lucky, and so get a chance of dying in their beds. But for the most part they are destined to become what are called light horsemen (that

is, robbers of ships lying in the river) and plunderers working for the receivers of Wapping and Shadwell, and pretty certain to be either knocked on the head in some brawl or hanged for robbery.

The boys looked up on hearing the steps; but, seeing a dead body (as it seemed) being carried by half a dozen men, they prudently observed silence, and lay snug, lest they themselves might be put into the condition of being unable to give evidence. The men carried their burden up the steps, cursing and grumbling at the weight—a body measuring six feet one is not a light weight even for six men to carry. Then they turned the lantern once more upon his face.

'He is stark dead,' said one. 'Let us empty his pockets and chuck him into the river.'

'No—no,' said another. 'Bring him along. He is not dead.'

So they lifted him up and carried him along the streets, where by this time the taverns were closed, and the people all gone to their beds. Jack knew very well that they must be somewhere among those streets of sailors' houses and sailors' shops which lie between the river side and the market gardens of Shadwell and Wapping. But still he understood not what was intended by carrying him here.

Presently they halted at a house—it was in the High Street, Wapping. By this time Jack had cautiously opened his eyes. He saw that he was in the hands of a company of six. What had these fellows to do with him? Why did they take all this trouble?

Then the door was opened, and they carried him into the house and up the stairs into a room at the back. Here they flung him down upon the floor, and that so roughly that his wound was opened and he swooned away once more.

When he recovered, he found that they were dragging his clothes from him.

'Now,' said one of them, 'throw a blanket over him, Parson. Lay them things ready for him to put on; they're the clothes of the poor devil who died here last week. If he wants to escape, he will have either to run naked or to put on these duds, instead of his fine uniform, which will change him so as his own mother won't know him again. Perhaps she won't get the chance of setting eyes upon her boy for many a year to come. Now then, smart's the word, ye lubbers; we've got our man snug and safe, and now we'll have some supper, and watch turn about.'

Jack was now wide awake, but his head was still heavy. Things looked black. He was in a house at Wapping, and he was stripped naked; he had an open and bleeding wound in the head; a bundle of rags was lying beside him in place of his own clothes; he was guarded by half a dozen ruffians, as ugly and villainous-looking a crew as one may desire. In looking at them, being, perhaps, a little light-headed with his wound, he began to think about Mr. Brinjes' piratical crew, and how they fought and killed each other. Perhaps these gentlemen might begin to fight after

they had taken their supper. Perhaps they would all kill each other. Meanwhile he lay perfectly still, with one eye half open.

Then the man they called 'Parson' came upstairs, bringing food and drink, which he set upon the table, and they took their supper for the most part in silence, or, if there was any talk, it was disguised and rendered unintelligible by the oaths and cursing which wrapped it up. The fellows, in fact, were uneasy; they had faithfully carried out their orders, but they knew not what might happen in consequence to themselves. It is the punishment of such men as these that they must needs do what their master bids them, as much as if they were bound hand and foot to the Devil, because they are one and all in his power, and he might cause every man to be hanged if he chose. The Parson had now lit the fire, which was blazing cheerfully, and there was a candle on the table. The room was small, and the windows were barred; the air was heavy and stinking. As for the Parson, Jack observed that he was a young man, whose face bore the marks of deep dejection, but not of the brutal habits which were stamped upon the faces of his associates. And he was dressed in a cassock. What was a clergyman doing in such a house?

When the men had eaten their supper, they began to pass round the pannikin. They passed it so quickly that Jack hoped they would speedily get drunk, so that the fighting might begin. They did get drunk, but they did not fight. One after the other, they fell asleep, until two only were left awake. These were to take the first watch, and had therefore been obliged to spare the pannikin. The Parson quietly laid the four who were asleep upon the floor, their feet to the fire. Then he took the candle and looked at Jack.

'Our new recruit,' he said, speaking with the voice of a scholar, and not in the coarse and rude speech of his companions—'our new recruit appears to be overcome with fatigue. Zeal for the service hath, doubtless, laid him low.'

He laid aside the hair, and looked at the wound. 'It is more than fatigue,' he said. 'I perceive that he hath received a hurt. It is not uncommon with those who come to this house.'

'He fell down,' one of the men replied; 'and he fell down so gallus hard that he knocked his head upon a stone, and hasn't opened his eyes nor his mouth since.'

'Gentlemen, the man hath an ugly wound. 'Twere a pity—his Honour would take it ill—if anything happened to this man, a tall and proper fellow, for want of a little care. By your permission, I will bring cold water and dress the wound.'

They made no objection, and the Parson presently returned with a clout and cold water, with which he washed the blood, and applied plaister to the wound. As for the bleeding, it was caused by the cutting of the ear rather than the blow on the skull. This done, he laid a blanket over Jack's bare limbs.

'He will now,' said the Parson, 'when he recovers, lie easier. It is long since you brought in so brave a recruit. Call me, gentle-

men, when he recovers; the pulse is quick and strong; he will not long be senseless. I am but in the next room. Shall I bring you some more rum, gentlemen?'

'You may, Parson. The jug is out. Fill it up. We have four hours' watch before us. And more tobacco.'

The fire was now burning low. Through the bars of the windows Jack could see the stars, and presently a clock hard by struck twelve. He was a recruit, he now understood. In other words, he had been kidnapped, and was in the house of a crimp. Everybody has heard of such places, but they do not generally kidnap officers of the King's Navy. However, it seemed as if they were not going to murder him, which was a comfort. No man, not even the bravest, likes to be knocked on the head, in a house of crimps, while helpless and faint.

The men who were on watch filled and lit their pipes, and began to talk in low voices.

'I'm queerly sleepy, mate,' said one. 'How hard they breathe, don't they?'

'There were no orders about his purse,' said the other. 'Five guineas and a crown. That's a guinea and a shilling apiece. Little enough, too, for our trouble. What about the clothes?'

'There's no orders about the clothes. Let us have them too.'

'No, no. Let us burn the clothes. Guineas can't tell no tales. But a King's uniform can. Best burn 'em.'

'Mate,' said the other, 'I don't like the job. It's no laughing matter, I doubt. Let us cut his throat at once, while the others are asleep. We can slash his face, and lay him naked in the fields, so as no one won't know him again.'

'Same as we did that other fellow who tried to get away. We took him to Whitechapel Mount, though.'

'We've knocked many on the head before.'

'But never a King's officer. This one won't order up no man again for six dozen, will he?'

'Perhaps he is dead already.'

The speaker rose and took the candle. Then he stooped beside the motionless figure and slowly passed the candle across the eyes. If you do this before a man who is sound asleep, he will become restless and uneasy even if he is not actually awake; if you do it to a waking man it is difficult indeed for him not to open his eyes or wink them. But Jack made no sign.

'He is still senseless,' said the man. 'I wonder if he is really dead? He felt his heart.

'No; his heart is beating.'

'Mate?' asked the other. Jack understood, though his eyes were closed, that there was a gesture as of a knife across the throat.

''Twould make all sure,' he said; 'dead men tell no tales. Suppose we were to ship him, what is to prevent their finding out that they've a King's officer on board? Suppose we finish

him off now, who will be able to split on us? Let us take and do it—you and me, while he's unconscious. What is it? One slice of the knife, and we've done with him, in a neat and workmanlike manner.'

'Hold hard a bit, mate. What about the tall fellow on the other side? You heard what he said. Besides, the Parson knows. We can't cut the Parson's throat as well. But it's the tall fellow I fear, not the Parson.'

'If it comes to hanging,' said the other, swearing horribly, damme if I swing alone.'

'You'll have me kicking alongside of you, mate, and the rest of us. We shall all swing in a row.'

'Ay, and he shall kick with us. Oh! I know who he is.'

'Who is he?'

'That's my secret. I know him. And that is enough.'

'Tell me, my hearty.'

'His name is Fletcher—Aaron Fletcher. He's a boatbuilder by trade, but he's got a boat of his own, which he keeps sometimes at Gravesend, and sometimes up the Medway, and sometimes she lays off Leigh, in Essex, where I've unladen many a cargo for him. If so be we are brought into trouble by this night's job pass the word for a warrant to arrest Aaron Fletcher. Don't you forget the name—Aaron Fletcher, of Deptford, him as give the orders, and stood behind a tree, ready to whistle when the lantern showed we'd got him.'

'I won't forget, mate. Let us leave the job till to-morrow. If it's to be a throat job, take in the rest: make 'em all have a hand in it—Parson and all. Every man shall have his hand in it. What! Are we two to be hanged and the rest get off?'

They went back to their pipes and their rum.

'The ship sails next Saturday at noon,' said one. 'We've got but ten recruits, counting the Parson, and I doubt if the Captain will let him go. Because why? 'Tis useful and handy to have a man in the place like the Parson, who won't get drunk, and does the house-work beautiful, and doesn't look outside the doors for fear of being taken. There's the 'prentice and the footpad, and the fellow who sits and snivels all day long. What with the war and the new ships and the new regiments, the Company's service will go to the dogs; and what is to become of us? It is a poor show after the stout fellows we used to hale on board, all so drunk that they couldn't stand.'

'The Captain says business must get better, and he can't have a set o' lazy rogues eating their heads off. Why did the Captain send us to Deptford? He must be in it as well.'

'If he is, who's to prove it? He didn't give no orders. Pass the pannikin.'

Their pipes being now out, they began to drink faster, Jack looking on, half tempted to pretend recovery and to ask for a tot of the drink. Fortunately, he refrained. For, in a short time, he

perceived that their heads began to drop and their eyes to swim. 'Never,' thought Jack, 'have I seen men get drunk in this fashion before.' Then they caught at the table to prevent falling, and poured more rum from the jug into the pannikin and drank it, but with unsteady hand. Then their heads nodded heavily at each other, with wild eyes, as if they would fain keep sober; and then one of them fell from his chair upon the floor, and, with a drunken curse upon his lips, fell instantly fast asleep. 'The rum must have the Devil in it,' Jack said to himself.

There was now only one man left of the whole six. It was the man who was so anxious to finish off the job in workmanlike fashion. He looked round him stupidly. His five comrades were lying on the floor, breathing heavily. His eyes fell upon the corner where Jack lay. He rose up, and opened the sailor's knife which hung round his neck.

'I'll cut his throat,' he said with drunken cunning, 'while the others are asleep. In the morning I shall say they did it, and I looked on, but couldn't prevent, so drunk they were, and me the only sober one. The Captain, he won't let 'em all be hanged, poor devils! when I tell him how they got drunk, and would do it, whatever I could say.' Here he rolled, and nearly fell. He reached for the jug, and drank from it. Then his legs gave way beneath him, and he fell upon his back. He tried to get up, still holding his knife in his hand, and meditating the murder. But he fell back, his head pillowed upon a sleeping brother's leg.

'I'll cut his throat,' he said, 'first thing in the morning, before the others wake. If Aaron—Aaron—comes to ask—I'll cut his throat, too—and the Parson's, too—and the Captain's. I'll cut all their throats.'

He said no more, and then there was nothing heard but the heavy breathing and snoring of the whole six. And Jack heard the clock of St. John's strike two. He was not killed yet, and the murderers were dead drunk. If only he could find the strength to get up, and to put on the rags which lay beside him in place of his own clothes!

CHAPTER XX.

OF JACK'S ESCAPE.

This resolution of the doubt whether he was to be immediately slaughtered or not naturally gave the Lieutenant considerable satisfaction. The villain who was chiefly set upon his murder was fast asleep, breathing heavily, the knife still in his hand with which he had intended to carry out his diabolical design had not the rum overmastered him.

He tried to sit up. Alas! his head was like a heavy lump of lead which he could not lift. That he was stripped naked would

have mattered little; he had a blanket, and the fellows had not taken off his shoes, so that had he got out into the street, he would have appeared bareheaded, wrapped round the body with a rug, like a savage; yet, as to his feet, dressed in white silk stockings and silver buckled shoes. Sailors have been turned out into the street in even worse plight than this, and certainly one would rather escape naked than not at all.

So he lay, listening and watching, for two hours and more. Then the candle, which had been flickering in the socket, went out suddenly, and there was no light except a dim red glow from the dying embers in the fireplace, and the house seemed perfectly quiet.

'This,' said Jack, listening, 'looks more hopeful. If only I could sit up!'

He confessed afterwards, and was not ashamed to confess, that he was greatly moved with fear during this uncertainty of his fate, and that no action at sea could compare for dreadfulness with this helpless lying in a corner, expecting at any moment to be slaughtered like a poor silly sheep. 'For,' he said, 'if a man cannot fight, he must needs be a coward. There is no help for him. I shall never laugh at cowards more. I had no strength left in me to make the least resistance—no, not so much as a girl. And I looked every moment to hear one of these villains stir and wake up.'

They did not stir or make the least sign of waking; but Jack heard footsteps on the stairs. 'Here comes another murderer,' he thought; 'it is now all over with me, and I shall see my Bess no more. Poor girl! Will she murder Aaron in revenge? Or will she never find out, and marry him? Oh for ten minutes of my old strength and a cudgel!'

The extremity of his agitation gave him power to lift his head and sit upright, leaning against the wall, and looking for nothing less than immediate death.

The footsteps were those of the man in the cassock, whom they called the Parson. He carried in his hand a candle, with which he surveyed the room and the sleeping men. Then he turned to the prisoner.

'So,' he said, 'you have come to your senses, and can sit up. Do you think you can stand and walk?'

'If you mean to murder me,' said Jack, 'do it at once, without more jaw—of which we have had enough.'

'I have no such thought, sir. Murder you? Heaven forbid! Why should I murder you?'

'Then hush! or you will wake these fellows.'

'Wake them?' The Parson kicked the man who lay nearest him. 'Wake them? If the house was in flames, they would not wake up till they were half burned. In this place, sir, we know our business and how to doctor the drink, so as to produce as sound a sleep as is thought necessary. For instance, you may sing or dance, or do anything you please, but you shall not wake up these

fellows. I have done the job for them, and they are safe for six hours and more to come.'

'What do you want with me, then?' asked Jack. 'You are one of them, and yet——'

'I am in this house for my sins and for my punishment, not for my pleasure. Ask me no more. As for what I want with you, I am come to set you free.'

'To set me free? Is it possible?'

'Sir,' said this strange creature, 'you are astonished to find any conscience at all in such a place, which is, indeed, truly the habitation of devils. Yet I would not have your murder added to my guilt, and, upon my word, sir, when these villains come to their senses, I believe there is no chance for you whatever. For, sir, consider. The kidnapping of a King's officer, and the shipping of him on board an East Indiaman, is a thing which cannot fail to be discovered, and it is certainly a hanging matter. I know not what madness possessed them to attempt it. Therefore they are mighty uneasy, and though they have put off the matter for the night, because you were senseless, and no man likes to kill another in his sleep, yet to-morrow morning, when they come to themselves and consider the dangers they are in, they will, I am certain, resolve to despatch you in order to make all sure; and then, after slashing your face, they will lay you in some open and exposed spot, as Whitechapel Mount or the market gardens, or very likely, if it seems easier done, they will tie a stone to your feet and drop you into the river. Because, sir, the body once out of the way, and not to be recognised, who is to prove the murder, unless one of the villains turns informer?'

To this Jack could make no reply, but still he marvelled greatly that such a man should be in such a place.

'Certain I am,' the Parson continued, 'that never man had a more narrow escape than you. And had you been conscious, or showed any signs of life, they would have brained you. Therefore I kept coming and going, because, though the house reeks with murder, I think that they would not go so far as to murder you before my eyes. But come, sir, it is close upon early morning, and already nearly three of the clock. Rise, if you can, and dress yourself in these rags that are left out for you. Indeed, sir, I cannot restore to you your clothes, which are downstairs, because I wish it to appear that you have escaped by your own wit and daring. Quick, then, and put on these things.'

Then, as Jack was unable of himself to stand, this Samaritan — for he was nothing short —brought him a chair, and helped him to raise himself into it, and clothed him as if he were a child. The things which he had to put on were so old and ragged that they would scarce hold together; and they were so dirty that no ragamuffin of the street would have picked them out of the gutter; no scarecrow in the fields ever had such clothes. They consisted of nothing more than a pair of corduroy breeches, and a dirty old

knitted waistcoat, both in tatters and full of holes. Nevertheless, when Jack had them on, his courage came back to him. A man feels stronger when he has put on his clothes. Also, perhaps, he was already somewhat recovered of the blow.

'I feel,' he said, 'as if I could now make some fight.'

'It needs not,' the Parson replied. 'Talk not of fighting, but lean on me, and we will try to get down the stairs. Remember, it is your only chance to get out of the place before these fellows awake. I have, below, something that may revive you. Try now if you can stand.'

He could, though with great difficulty. Surely never was there stranger figure than Jack at this moment. The ragged waistcoat was too tight to button round his chest; the corduroy breeches were too short for so tall a man, and showed his bare knees; the white silk stockings and the silver buckles ill assorted with a dress so sordid; and, to crown all, one side of his head, where the Parson had partly washed it, showed his natural hair, with streaks of blood upon the neck; but the other side was powdered and tied back with black ribbon. But Jack thought little of his appearance.

'Good,' said the Parson. 'Now lean your hand upon my shoulder, and we will go slowly.'

'I wish I was strong enough first to handcuff and make fast these rogues,' said Jack.

'Come, sir, your life is at stake, and mine too—if that mattered. Think not upon revenge.'

'Aaron,' said Jack, 'my turn will come. As for revenge, I say not. I would not kill him; but tit-for-tat is fair. Easy, Aaron; easy. You would make me prisoner, and ship me for a recruit! Very well, Aaron, very well. I shall get my turn soon! Come, Parson, if that is what you wish to be called.'

So this strange Parson supported him slowly and gently down the stairs and into the kitchen, where he found a chair for him, and set upon the table cold meat and bread, and poured from a jar a glass of rum.

'This,' he said, 'is not drugged. You can drink it without fear. Yet be moderate, for you are still weak. So now eat a little, but not much, and then you shall go away in safety. But forget not to thank God, who hath delivered you from death, and from a den where murders and villainies call aloud for the vengeance which will certainly fall upon it.'

Who, thought Jack, would expect an exhortation to religion in a crimp's house?

As he ate and drank, his strength came back to him, although he still remained dizzy, and somewhat uncertain of step.

'Man,' he said, when he had taken his supper, 'who and what are you, and why do you live here among these people?'

'I came here because I am a villain, like my masters; and I stay here because, like them also, I have no other way of escaping the gallows. Is that reason enough?'

'They call you Parson; you wear a cassock; you talk like a scholar. What hath brought a scholar to such a place?'

'They may call me Bishop if they please. I am the servant of these men. They say unto me "Go," and I go; or "Come," and I obey; if there be any greater degradation for a scholar than to live as cook and servant to fetch and carry drink for a crew of cut-throat crimps, I would fain know what it is. Methinks I would offer to exchange.'

'Why,' said Jack, 'for the matter of an exchange, you might ship as purser's mate, and see how you like that; but hang me if I understand how a clergyman should get to such a place.'

Jack now considered his rescuer more carefully. He was a young man not more than five or six and twenty; his cassock was not old, but it was battered and stained with grease: his shoes had no buckles, but were tied with string and were down at heel; his wig was not one which consorted with his sacred calling, being nothing better than an old 'prentice's bob minor, short in the neck, in order to show the buckle of the stock, and as old as any of the worn-out scratches, jemmies, and bob majors which the people fish for at a penny a dip in Petticoat Lane, and even a boy who blacks boots might scorn for the purposes of his trade; but his face was delicate and handsome—a face very far from the dissolute looks of the fellows upstairs.

'Look ye, brother,' said Jack, 'you have saved my life. What can I do for thee?'

'Nothing,' the Parson replied. 'I am a lost rogue, though not, I hope, beyond the reach of pardon, and you can do nothing, I thank you.'

'Thou hast saved my life. Damme, rogue or not, take my hand. Nay,' for the other hesitated, 'I will have it. Give me thy hand. Now, then, we are brothers. What hast thou done?'

'It is true,' he said, 'that I am an ordained clergyman of the Church of England. Unworthy that I am, I may call myself a clerk in holy orders.'

'I am in a very pretty rig for an officer in the King's service; but hang me if you are not in a worse for a parson.'

'Sir,' the poor man began, with hanging head, 'I lost my curacy by the death of my Rector, and I could get no other, nor any preferment at all, not even the smallest, having no interest and being unknown to any Bishop or private patron. Then I quickly spent my little stock—not, I can truthfully avow, in extravagance, or waste, or vicious courses; and I presently found that I had nothing left but one poor shilling. This I was unwilling to spend, and I walked about the streets, picking up crusts or turnips that had been dropped into the gutter, until I became well-nigh desperate. Sir, you see before you a common footpad. Dressed as I was in the cassock of my profession, I ventured to stop a gentleman in the street, and to demand his money or his life.'

'Did he give you his money?'

'No. He turned out to be a man of courage—a thing which I had not looked for. Therefore he drew his sword, and I fled, he running after me, crying "Stop thief! Stop thief!" I escaped, and got home unperceived, as I thought, to my lodging. Never again shall I hear that cry without a knife piercing my heart. The next day I went to the nearest coffee-house, meditating death by my own hands. It is a terrible thing to be a suicide, but worse is it to live among these rogues. I fell in with the Captain, as they call him, the owner of this house and another like it in Chancery Lane. He, perceiving my trouble, accosted me, and presently brought me here and gave me strong drink, under which I told him all.'

'But why do you stop here against your will?'

'Because, alas! the Hue and Cry is out after me. In some way—I know not how—the gentleman I thought to rob found means to know my name. If I venture forth I shall be arrested, and presently hanged. For that I must not complain, because the punishment might be taken mercifully in atonement for my offence. But there are others'—here he choked, and the tears came into his eyes.

He drew a paper from his pocket, and gave it to Jack. It was a piece of a Gazette.

'Last evening we hear that a robbery was attempted about ten o'clock in Chancery Lane by a man dressed as a clergyman, who stopped a gentleman and demanded his money or his life, but, being confronted by a drawn sword, ran away. The villain succeeded in escaping, but will, it is hoped, be discovered, the gentleman being confident that he knows who he is, and can swear to him.'

'How long ago was this?'

'It is now six months. I have entreated the Captain to ship me with the rest, but he will not, saying that he hath never before had in the house a servant who would neither steal nor drink.'

'Six months. Why, man, a Hue and Cry that is six months old! Courage! Tell me thy name.'

The poor man made a clean breast of all, telling him his name, and trusting him, in short, with his neck. But no one could converse with Jack, or look into his face, without trusting him. As for his name, it must not be set down. For the man who had thus sunk to the lowest ignominy was presently enabled to return to his own station and his sacred profession, no one knowing aught of what had happened. Not only did he resume his ministry, but he obtained a curacy, and in time received preferment, being now the incumbent of a London church, and greatly beloved for his devotion, eloquence, and learning; so that it is thought by many that, if promotion goes by merit, he may soon become a Bishop. And, since no one knows, except myself, this episode of his early manhood, let the thing remain for ever a secret.

'And now,' said the clergyman, 'the time is getting on. Go,

while the way is clear. Go, sir. And forget this vile house and the unhappy men that are in it.'

'As for forgetting the house,' said Jack, 'you shall see how I will forget the house.'

'You must go away dressed as you are, because I would not be suspected. Wherefore I shall leave the door unlocked and unbarred. Here is a cudgel for you, but you will not need it. All the rogues of Wapping—whose name is Legion—are asleep at this hour. Go, then, and remember that never, even in battle, will you be nearer unto death than you have been this night.'

He opened the door, which was carefully locked and bolted, and set the prisoner free. Then leaving the door unlocked, as if it had been left so by the escaping captive, the Parson crept upstairs to his own pallet.

It was now past three o'clock in the morning, and still quite dark. The cold air made Jack shiver in his rags, but it revived and refreshed him. He looked up and down the street. There were no passengers at that hour save the market gardeners' carts, which were already lumbering along, filled with vegetables, to the markets of the Fleet and Covent Garden; the rest of the world was still sleeping. Then he surveyed the house carefully.

'Forget this house, quoth his reverence? I shall first forget Aaron Fletcher.'

It was too dark to observe particularly any distinguishing marks. There was no sign hung out. The ground-floor was lower than the street, and the upper storey, which projected two feet and more, and looked as if it was going to fall at any moment, had thick bars outside the windows. 'I shall know the house again,' said Jack, 'by the bars. And now, gentlemen, sleep on and dream—I wish you pleasant dreams—until I come back, which will be, I take it, before you have yet awakened.'

CHAPTER XXI.

A RUDE AWAKENING.

About six o'clock in the morning, when, at this time of year, it is already daylight, there marched down the High Street of Wapping a company seen there often enough in the evening, when they are expected and men are prepared for them, but seldom so early. Who, indeed, expects a Pressgang at daybreak? The party consisted of a dozen sailors, armed each with a short cudgel, and a Lieutenant in command, with a drawn cutlass. With the officer walked a tall man, young, barcheaded, and strangely attired in a ragged knitted waistcoat, tattered breeches tied up with string and loose at the knees, and yet with white silk stockings, shoes with silver buckles, and, on one side only, powdered hair. The streets at this time are already full of those who are hastening to the day's work; most of the houses are open, and the maids are at the doors

twirling their mops, or at the windows throwing open the shutters; or, in the more genteel houses, they are plastering the doorsteps with yellow ochre.

'Twas, indeed, the Pressgang, more dreaded than revenue officers or Bow Street runners, and its appearance at this early hour caused everywhere the liveliest curiosity and the greatest consternation. Those who met them either stopped still to look after them, their faces full of apprehension, or they ran into open houses, or they fled without a word, or they turned into a side street or court, for fear of being taken for sailors. Many of those who fled were landsmen, and honest mechanics, because, when the Press is hot, it does not always respect landsmen, although the law is peremptory against taking any but sailors. This company, however, paid no heed to any, whether they ran or whether they stood, marching along without attempting to seize them, though some of the men were Thames watermen, and others were lightermen, and some dockmen, and others mere river pirates and plunderers, or, as they call them, receivers, copemen, ratcatchers, coopers, mudlarks, light horsemen, and lumpers, all of whom have been held to be sailors within the meaning of the Act.

Presently the man in rags, who seemed to be leading the party, stopped, and looked about him.

'Ay,' he said, 'I believe this to be the house. Now, my lads, steady all; for we have 'em, neat and tidy, just as if they were so many rats caught in a bag.'

As soon as the people in the street understood—this took them no long time—that the Press, out, no doubt, on some special and unusual business of the greatest importance—was actually going to visit the crimp's house, probably in search of the malingerers, deserters, or cowardly skulkers often lying there, in hope to be snug and out of the way, there was a lively curiosity. For skulkers these people entertain a mingled curiosity and contempt—the former on account of their cunning at disguise and hiding, and the latter because, the sea being their trade, they will not bravely follow it. The workman, no longer fearful of his own safety, stopped to look on, his tools in his bag, careless if he should be late at his shop; the waterman, who, at first sight of the party, trembled for himself, stopped on his way to the Stairs where he plied, though he might thereby lose an early fare, and stood curious to see what might happen, blowing into his fingers to keep them warm; the maids came out from the house doors and stood around, mop in hand, expressing at first their opinions of the Press, without any fear of the Lieutenant, or respect to authority—there are certainly no such enemies of good government as the women. But when these honest girls found that the Press was not come to carry off their lovers, but in order to visit the house about which there was so much mystery, and concerning which there were told so many stories, they stopped their abuse and waited to see what would come of it. Within those barred windows strange things were

carried on. Terrible stories are told of crimps' houses. Fearful sounds had been heard proceeding from this house; shrieks and cries for mercy, and the trampling of feet! Sometimes there was singing, with laughter, and the noise of men making merry over drink; sometimes there were loud quarrels, with the noise of fighting. Those who entered this house were generally carried in; those who came out were generally carried out. It was said that sometimes those who were carried out were not drunk, but dead; and that they were not put into the boat to be shipped on board an East Indiaman, but to be dropped into the river at mid-stream, with a stone tied to their feet. Therefore the crowd, which increased every moment, looked on with satisfaction. They might now be enabled to see, for themselves, what manner of house this was.

'I think, sir,' said Jack to the Lieutenant in command, 'that if you would leave two men at the door, we can with the remainder very easily dispose of the rogues in the house, whether they are awake or asleep.'

The house was not astir yet; the door was not yet opened; the shutters of the ground-floor windows were not yet thrown back. It looked, in the broad daylight, a dirty, disgraceful den; the doors and shutters black with dirt and want of paint; the windows of the upper storeys seemed as if they had never been cleaned since they had first been put up, and some of the panes of glass were broken.

'If they are awake, they will fight,' said Jack. 'But they have no pistols, so far as I could see.'

The door yielded to a push. The Parson had, therefore, left the door as if Jack had escaped by unlocking and unbarring it.

Jack led the way upstairs, and threw open the door of the room in which he had so nearly met a horrid and violent death. Behold! all the men were lying just as they had fallen, some on their faces, some on their backs, their mouths open, and breathing heavily. The fire was out, and the air of the place was horribly close and ill-smelling.

'Here they are,' said Jack as the Lieutenant followed him. 'Saw one ever lustier rogues? Here is a haul for you.'

'They are dressed like sailors,' said the Lieutenant, looking at them with curiosity and misgiving. But I doubt it. I have never known crimps' men to be sailors. Mostly this sort are river-side rogues, and to take them on board would only be to put into the fo'ks'le so many past masters in all villainy.'

'That is true,' Jack replied, 'and I doubt they will want continual smartening from the bo's'n: and such mutinous dogs that they will at first spend half their time triced up to the gratings. Yet, if you refuse them, I must needs have them hanged; and this I am not, I confess, willing to do, because there is one other who must then hang with them. And I would not, if I could avoid it, compass his death.'

'Then I will press them,' said the Lieutenant, making up his

mind. 'Ready with the handcuffs! Stand by! Handcuff every man!'

The sailors pulled them up one after the other, waking them with kicks and cuffs, and made each man safe. Thus, shaken violently out of their sleep, they stood gazing stupidly at each other, still only half awake, and not knowing what had befallen them, or where they were, or anything at all.

'Bring them downstairs and into the open,' the Lieutenant commanded. 'Rouse up every one of them with the pump. Now for the rest of the house.'

'I believe there are no other sailors here,' said Jack; 'only two or three poor devils in hiding till they can be shipped for the East Indies.'

The men went through the house, and presently returned, bringing four or five prisoners—namely, the recruits of the Company. A most valuable addition they would have made to the Service, truly, for a more scarecrow, terrified crew could not be found anywhere. As for the 'prentice, a white-faced puny wretch, who had robbed his master's till, at the sight of the officer with a drawn sword, and the men, their faces fierce and unrelenting, standing around, he immediately imagined that they were all come for his own arrest, and that this was the first step towards Newgate and the gallows. Wherefore he fell upon his knees blubbering.

'Alas!' he cried, 'I am a miserable sinner! I confess all. I have robbed my master. Oh! let me have mercy. Let me live, and I will pay all back! Only let me live!' And so on, as if the noose was already ready for him, and the rope hitched to the gallows.

The next was a sturdier rogue. He would have been hanged for coining false money had he been caught. But he understood that a company of sailors is not sent forth to arrest men charged with civil offences. Therefore, and in order to save his neck, he very readily volunteered, and being a brisk, smart lad, though a rogue from childhood, and a thief, forger, coiner, and pickpocket, I dare say he turned out as good a sailor as can be expected of a landsman; and if he could not go aloft to bend or reef a sail, he could help to man a gun and carry a pike. The third man was the deserter, who represented himself as a man milliner, and was suffered to go free, because milliners are of little use on a man-o'-war; the next was a bankrupt, once a substantial tradesman, who had ruined himself with drink and vicious courses, and came voluntarily to the crimp's to be enlisted in the Company's service, in order to escape his creditors. But his face was so puffed and purple with drink, his limbs so trembled beneath him, that I doubt whether he would have lasted the voyage. There was another, whose wife was a termagant, and extravagant to boot, and he was flying from her and from her debts. He, too, offered to volunteer, saying that he would rather dwell with the Devil than with his wife; but the Lieutenant would not have him. And another there

was who was a broken gamester, a gentleman by birth, and a physician from Glasgow University, a native of Jamaica, where he had at first a good fortune, but was now fallen from his former condition, without friends, estate, or money, and held no other hope except to take service with the Company. There were one or two others, but all of them, except the false coiner, the Lieutenant, without inquiring further into their characters or their histories, ordered to go about their business; but as for the 'prentice, who still blubbered that he was a repentant sinner, and asked permission only to live, he fetched him a box o' the ears and a kick, and bade him go his way and be hanged.

This poor wretch, who had been torn partly with terror at the thought of going to the Indies to fight, being a desperate coward, and partly with remorse, made haste to obey the Lieutenant, and departed; and what became of him, whether he went to his master and confessed and obtained pardon, or whether he was thrown into Newgate and hanged, or whether he fell into worse courses, I know not. 'The way of transgressors,' saith Holy Writ, 'is hard.'

There remained the Parson, who said nothing, but waited patiently for his fate.

'As for this man,' said Jack, laying his hand upon his shoulder, 'he is my prisoner. Leave him to me.'

This, then, was Jack's revenge. He might have seen the men swing—and they deserved nothing short of hanging—but it pleased him better to think of these fat, tender-skinned, delicate, over-fed, and drunken rogues, as cowardly as they were pampered, howling under the lash, and mutinously grumbling under the discipline of a King's ship. They were mere landsmen, who had never been to sea at all, even if they had ever been on board a ship (if they had, it was only to look for something to steal). But they had lived on the river side all their lives, and knew the talk of sailors; and they equipped themselves—a part of their trade—in slops and round jackets, the better to decoy their victims.

The men were still so stupid with the drug they had taken that they understood nothing of what was done until they had first had their heads held under the pump for a quarter of an hour. Then they began to remember what had happened; and seeing their late prisoner with the party of captors, they cast rueful looks at one another, and, like the poor 'prentice, looked for nothing short of Newgate, and for the fatal cart and the ride to Tyburn—which, indeed, for this and many other crimes, they richly deserved.

It would have gone hard with Aaron had this been the destination intended for them by their victim. Nothing is more distasteful to a rogue than to hang alone, when his brother rogues have escaped. It offends his sense of justice. Perhaps, however, the going out of the world in so violent a manner, in company with an old friend, is felt to be less cold and comfortless than to go alone. But Aaron, as well as these men, was reserved for another fate.

This business despatched, and the men, now fully awake,

drawn up two and two in readiness to march, Jack addressed them with great courtesy, though the sailors of the Press grinned and put tongue in cheek.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'last night your honours were good enough to offer me the hospitality of your house; you also debated very seriously whether you should not murder me; that you did not do so is the cause why your honours are now handcuffed. You will go with these honest sailors, and you will thank me henceforth every day of your lives for my goodness in getting you impressed. Such brave lads as you will rejoice to run up aloft in a gale of wind; and the enemy's shot you will value no more than a waterman's jest. You are so smart that the bo'sn's supple-jack will never curl about your shoulders, nor his rope's-end make your fat legs jump. As to drink, I fear there has been more punch served out in this house than is good for your health; that is better ordered aboard. And it will do your honours good to see each other brought to the gangway for the cat-o'-nine-tails sweetly to tickle his fat back. Perhaps you fresh-water sailors know not the tickling of the cat. Gentlemen, you have a truly happy life before you: I wish your honours farewell.'

It was the first speech Jack ever made. If it was not eloquent, it was to the point, and intelligible.

I do not think that the fellows understood one word of what he said, being fully possessed with the belief that they were going to Newgate and afterwards to be hanged. And when they presently found themselves taken on board the tender and shoved below deck, and understood that they were pressed for sailors, at first they grinned with joy. One who is threatened with death counts escape on any conditions, even the hardest, a thing to be welcomed with joy unspeakable. But when they discovered, after a few days' experience on board, what was meant by service at sea—a life of little ease, hard work and short time for sleep, and rough food, with the kicks and contempt which all true man-of-war's men show for lubbers, a limited ration of rum, and the necessity of immediate obedience, some of them fell into despair, and would skulk below till they were driven upwards by the bo'sn's supple-jack and the gunner's rattan, and these laid on in no stinted or niggard spirit. Some became mutinous and insubordinate: none of them knew anything of a seaman's duties, in spite of their sailor's dress, and were useless save for the simplest work. Therefore it naturally came to pass that, before long, one after another, they were tied up at seven bells, and soundly trounced, whereupon, their backs being soft and tender and unused to the lash, and their dispositions cowardly, and being ignorant of discipline and respect to their officers, when prayers for pity failed, they fell to cursing the captain and the lieutenants, the bo'sn, and the ship's crew, shrieking and screaming like mad women. So that they stayed where they were for another six dozen, and this admonition and instruction were repeated until they were finally made to understand that a man-o'-war is not a crimp's house, nor

a tavern at Wapping, where every man can call for what he chooses, sleep as long as he pleases, and take his pleasure; but a place where work has to be done, orders must be obeyed, and punishment in default is as certain as the striking of seven bells. Whether any of them ever returned I know not, but the house was broken up and their old occupation was destroyed, though no doubt other crimps' houses were soon established in its place.

When the Pressgang were gone there remained Jack, still in his rags, and the unlucky recruits.

'As for you fellows,' he said, 'my advice is, sheer off. This house is closed. There is no more shelter for you here. Go and hide elsewhere.'

'Where shall we go?' asked the poor gamester. 'Here at least we got meat and drink. Whither shall we go?'

They obeyed, however, and went out together, parting at the door and skulking away in different directions, perhaps to be picked up by another crimp.

'Brother,' said Jack to the Parson, 'come with me. First let me put on my own clothes, and then we will find a lodging for thee. Thou hast saved my life. Therefore, so long as I have a guinea left, thou shalt have the half.'

At first the poor man refused. He burst into tears, declaring that kindness was thrown away upon a wretch so disgraced and degraded as himself: that it would be better for him to stay where he was, and to receive with resignation the evils which he had brought upon his own head. 'What,' he asked, 'can be done for a man for whose apprehension a reward is offered and the Hue and Cry is out?'

'Hark ye, brother,' Jack repeated: 'thou hast saved my life. If thou wilt not come with me willingly, hang me, but I will drag thee along! What! wouldst remain alone in this den? Come, I say, and be treated for thine own good. What! There was no robbery, after all. As for the Hue and Cry, leave that to me. I will tackle the Hue and Cry, which I value not an inch of rogues' yarn.'

I do not know what he understood by the Hue and Cry, or how he was going to tackle it; but being always a masterful man, who would ever have his own way, he overcame the Parson's scruples, and presently had him away and safely bestowed in a tavern at Aldgate, where he engaged a room for him, and sent for a tailor, making the Parson put off his tattered cassock and his old wig, and sit in a night-cap and shirt sleeves until he was provided with clothes suitable to his profession, and a wig such as proclaimed it. Then Jack bade him rest quiet a day or two, and be careful how he stirred abroad, while he himself made inquiries into his case, and this matter of the Hue and Cry.

Now mark, if you please, the villainy of the man Jonathan Rayment. There never had been any reward offered for the arrest of this poor man at all; there was no Hue and Cry after him; the

gentleman whom, in the madness of his despair, he had thought to rob had not followed and tracked him; nothing was known about him at all; and his friends were wondering where he was, and why he sent no letters to them. The story of the Hue and Cry and the reward was invented by Mr. Rayment, who was, I believe, eldest son to the Father of Lies, in order to keep the unhappy man in his power, so that he could use him as the servant (or a slave) of the house as long as he pleased; or, if he thought it would be more profitable, could ship him as a recruit at any time. And while he was persuading this contrite sinner that the whole town rang with his wickedness, no one in the world knew anything about it, and there was no reason why he should not go openly to the St. Paul's coffee-house and sit among his fellow-divines. Briefly, Jack shared, half and half, all the money he had with this poor man, who presently obtained a lectureship, and afterwards a City church, and is now, as I have already stated, a most worthy, pious, devout, learned preacher; benevolent, eloquent, and orthodox, justly beloved by all his congregation; and, I dare affirm, none the worse because in his youth he experienced the temptation of poverty, was even suffered to fall into sin, felt the pangs of remorse and shame, and endured the torments of companionship with the most devilish kind of men that dwell among us in this our town of London.

So they, too, went away, Jack being restored to his own garments, though his purse, containing four or five guineas, was not in his pocket. And now the house was empty. The crowd had broken up and gone away, but the neighbours still gathered about, talking over the strange business of the morning. Presently they began to look in at the open door. There were no sounds or sign of occupation. Then they opened the doors of the rooms and looked curiously about them. The lower rooms were furnished with benches and tables, the wainscot walls gaping where the wood had shrunk, and the floors made brown with soot and small-beer, to hide the dirt. There was a kitchen, with a pot and frying-pan and some pewter dishes, tin pannikins and some remains of food, and, which was much more to the purpose, there was a small cask of rum, three-fourths full. The neighbours made haste to taste the rum provided, being curious to discover whether it was a stronger and more generous liquor than that to which they were themselves accustomed. In a few minutes the rumour of this cask spread to right and left along the street, and everybody hastened to taste the rum, and continued to taste it, until there was no more left. It was strong enough and generous enough to send them away with staggering legs and fuddled brains. Upstairs there were bedrooms with flock mattresses laid upon the floor, and in one room there were rings and staples and chains fixed in the wall for safely securing mutinous recruits. But all the rooms were foul and filthy.

When the neighbours went out, the boys came in and took possession joyfully, with no one to check or hinder their mischief. Never before had boys such a chance. When they left the house

there was not a whole pane of glass left in the windows, nor a bench, chair, or table that was not broken, nor any single thing left that could be carried away.

Next day the 'Captain'—that is, the worthy dealer in curiosities, of Leman Street, Mr. Jonathan Rayment—himself walked over to Wapping, in order to inquire into the health and welfare of his recruits and their numbers: he was also anxious to know what had happened in the adventure with the King's officer.

You may understand his surprise and dismay when he found everybody gone and everything broken. They had even torn away the wooden banisters of the stairs and ripped up the wooden steps. Nothing was left at all—not even those poor helpless creatures, the 'prentice and the Parson. Where could they be?

He did not dare to ask. Something terrible had happened. As for himself, he hurried home to hide himself in his shop until the danger was over. A curse upon Aaron Fletcher, and on his own foolishness, in suffering his men to meddle with Aaron's private quarrels! And a good business now broken up and destroyed; for how could the house be carried on without his men?

He looked to hear an account of his men in the 'Gazette;' how they were brought before the Lord Mayor and charged with highway robbery, and even sent to Newgate for trial. Strange! There was nothing. Nor did this worthy tradesman ever learn what had happened, for Aaron could tell him nothing, except that the Lieutenant had escaped; and he never dared venture to ask in Wapping. But he lost his servants and his recruits, and for a long time the business of crimping in those parts languished.

One thing remains to be told about this eventful day. In the evening, work being over, Aaron Fletcher was sitting alone, his pipe in his mouth, in the cottage where he lived, at the gates of his boat-building yard. He was in good spirits, because the Lieutenant was reported missing. Perhaps he was dead. It would be the best thing in the world if he was dead. What then? No one could say that he had any hand in it.

'Aaron!' cried a voice he knew, 'Aaron Fletcher, open the door!'

He dropped his pipe and turned pale, and his teeth chattered. It was the Lieutenant's voice, and he thought it sounded hollow. He was dead, then, and this was his ghost come to plague him. Aaron was a man of courage, but he was not prepared to tackle a ghost.

'Aaron,' the voice repeated, 'open the door, or I will break it in, ye murderous villain! Open the door, I say!'

Aaron obeyed, his cheeks ashy white, and his heart in his boots.

It was no ghost, however, but the Lieutenant in the flesh, tall and gallant, and apparently none the worse for the night's adventure, who walked in, followed by Mr. Brinjes. He was arrayed in his great wig and velvet coat, in honour of the Club whither he was going. This splendour added weight to the words which followed.

'Aaron,' said the Lieutenant, 'or Cain the Murderer, if you like the name better; there was, last night, a purse in my pocket containing, as near as I can remember, the sum of five guineas and a crown. Your friends have taken it from me. Give me back those five guineas and that crown.'

'What friends? I know nothing about any friends or any five guineas! What mean you? I know nothing about the matter. It was not I that knocked you on the head, Lieutenant.'

'Why—see—you are self-convicted and condemned! Who spoke of knocking on the head? How should you know what was done unless you were one of them? Five guineas, Aaron, and a crown, or'—here he swore a great oath—'you go before the magistrate to-morrow with your friends the crimp's men and answer to the charge of highway robbery, and thence to Newgate. And so, in due time, to Tyburn in a comfortable cart. Five guineas, Aaron.'

He held out his hand inexorably, while Aaron trembled. This man was worse than any ghost.

'Pay the money, Aaron,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'and thank your good fortune that you have so far got off so cheap. So far, Aaron. Not that we have done with you. Look for misfortune, friend Aaron.' He said this so solemnly that it sounded like a prophecy. 'Men who get crimps to rob for them and kidnap for them cannot hope to prosper. Therefore expect misfortune. You have many irons in the fire; you can be attacked on many sides; you build boats, you run across to the French coast, you sell your smuggled lace and brandy. Misfortunes of all kinds may happen to such as you. But you must pay this money, or else you will swing; you will swing, friend Aaron; and when you have paid it do not think to escape more trouble. I say not that it will be rheumatism, or sciatica, or lumbago, all of which lay a man on his back and twist his limbs, and pinch and torture him. Perhaps—— but look out for trouble.'

Aaron lugged out his purse and counted five guineas, which he handed over to Jack without a word.

'What?' cried Mr. Brinjes, his eye like a red-hot coal, 'the Lieutenant forgives you, and you think you are going to escape scot-free! Not so, Aaron, not so; there are many punishments for such as you. I know not yet but you must swing for this, in spite of this forgiveness. Many punishments there are. I know not yet what yours shall be.—Come, Lieutenant, leave him to dream of Newgate.'

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PRIVATEERS.

The time allowed to a sailor in which to make love is short, being no more than the interval between two voyages. (He generally makes up for brevity by the display of an ardour unknown to landsmen.) And now the hour approached when Jack must tear himself from the arms of his mistress, and go forth again to face the rude blast, the angry ocean, and the roaring of the enemy's guns. Regardless of his former sufferings, he desired nothing better than to put to sea once more; and he was not one to go away crying because there would be no more kisses for a spell.

Among the King's ships laid up in ordinary at Deptford, during the seven years' peace, was a certain twenty-eight-gun frigate called the 'Tartar.' I know not what had been her record up to this period; but that matters nothing, because it will be allowed that she is now very well known to all French sailors, and regarded by them with a very peculiar terror. She was built on lines somewhat out of the common, being sharper in the bows and narrower in the beam than most ships. She rode deep, but she was so fast a sailer that nothing could escape her when she crowded all her canvas and gave chase; a beautiful ship she was, to my eyes, even while laid up in ordinary, with the lower masts taken out of her, and a mere hulk.

'But,' said Jack, 'you should see such a ship sailing. What do you landsmen know of a ship, when you have never seen one running free before the wind, every inch of canvas set—studdin'-sails, flying jib, sky-scrapers, and all? You draw ships, Luke; but you have never even seen a ship at sea.'

That was true; but, on the other hand, I never attempted to draw a ship sailing on the ocean, nor have I ever painted waves or the open sea.

'Wait till you have seen the "Tartar" in a brisk nor'-wester, her masts bending, she sailing free, answering the least touch of her helm like a live thing—for that matter, a ship at sea *is* a live thing, as every sailor knows, and has her tempers.'

Jack became enamoured, so to speak, of this vessel from the first day when he revisited the Yard and saw the carpenters and painters at work upon her, and desired nothing so much as to be commissioned to her; for it was quite certain that she would be manned and despatched as soon as they could fit her out. (At this time they were working extra hours, and from daybreak to sunset, the men drawing increased pay, and all as happy as if the war was going to last for ever.)

'She is,' he said, 'a swift and useful vessel, and wants nothing but a fighting Captain, who will not wait for the enemy, but will

sail in search of him and make him fight. I would she had such a Captain, and I was on board with him.'

He presently got his desire, as you will hear, and the ship got such a Captain as he wished for her.

Meanwhile the days passed by, and still his appointment was delayed, so that, in spite of his amour, he began to fret and to grow impatient. The great man on whose word he relied had made him a clear and direct promise from which there could be, one would think, no departing. 'Trust me, Lieutenant,' he said; 'I assure you that you shall be appointed to a ship with as little delay as possible.' Yet appointments were made daily, and his own name passed by. What should we think, I humbly ask, of a plain merchant in the City who should thus disregard a straightforward pledge? Yet what would ruin the credit of a merchant is not to be blamed in a great man. By the advice of the Admiral, Jack once attended the levée of his noble patron; but, being unaccustomed to courtiers' ways, ignorant of the creeping art, and unused to push himself to the front, he got no chance of a word, or any recognition; though he says his patron most certainly saw him standing in the crowd; and so came away in disgust, railing at those who rise by cringing, and swearing at the insolence of lackeys. He then made a personal application at the Navy Office, where the clerks treated him with so much rudeness and contempt that it was a wonder he did not lose his temper and chastise some of them. So that his affairs looked in evil plight, and it seemed as if he might be kept waiting for a long time indeed, and perhaps never get an appointment or promotion. For though the Peace Estimates had reduced the Navy from the footing of 50,000 officers and men to that of 10,000—so that, when the war broke out again, the Admiralty were wanting officers as well as men—yet, as always happens, the applicants for berths were more numerous than the berths to be given away; and the favouritism which is everywhere unhappily in vogue, at the Admiralty hath always reigned supreme.

'Of one thing,' he declared, 'I am resolved. If I do not get my appointment before many months, I will seek the command of a privateer, or at least the berth of Lieutenant on board of one. There is, I know, no discipline aboard a privateer; the men are never flogged, and are generally a company of mutinous dogs, only kept in order by a Captain who can knock them down. But they are sturdy rascals, and will fight. I hear they are fitting out a whole squadron of privateers at Bristol; and there is a craft building at Taylor's yard, in Redriff—I saw her yesterday—which is never intended to carry coals between Newcastle and London, or sugar between Kingston and Bristol. She means Letters of Marque, my lad. Perhaps I could get the command of her. I am young, but I am a King's officer; and if you come to navigation—well, one must not boast. I will not stay at home doing nothing—what! when there is fighting? No. I must go too, and

take my luck. If they will not have me either in the King's service, or on board a privateer, or in the Company's navy, why, my lad, there is nothing left but to volunteer and go before the mast. They would not refuse me there, I warrant, and many a poor fellow has done as much already.'

It is true that, on the reduction of the naval force, there were many unfortunate young men, chiefly among midshipmen, who saw no hope of employment, being without interest, and therefore were obliged to give up the King's service, and either to get berths on merchantmen or to take commissions in the Company's service; or even, as certainly happened to some, to volunteer for service before the mast. Some became smugglers; some—but these were chiefly officers from the disbanded regiments—became town bullies and led captains; some strolling actors, and some highwaymen. The fate of these poor fellows was much in the mouths of the young officers waiting, like Jack, for a ship, who met and talked daily at the Gun Tavern.

Fortunately, our Lieutenant was not called to embark on board a privateer, for he found a friend who proved able and willing to assist him. This was the Resident Commissioner of the Yard, Captain Petherick, who took up Jack's case for him, and that so effectually, though I know not in what way, that he presently procured for him the appointment promised him, and which most he desired—namely, that of third lieutenant to the frigate 'Tartar,' to whom Captain Lockhart was now appointed. And he was a fighting captain, indeed if ever there was one.

I am sure that on the day which brought him his commission there was no happier man in Deptford than Lieutenant Easterbrook. He had now been in the service for nearly ten years, and for seven of them had been, through no fault of his own, debarred from every opportunity of distinction. Behold him, therefore, at last with his foot well on the ladder, albeit very near the lowest rung, holding His Majesty's commission as Lieutenant to H.M. frigate 'Tartar.' On that day it happened that the bells were ringing and the guns firing—to commemorate I know not what event. To Jack and to his friends it seemed as if the bells were ringing and the cannon were fired in his honour, and to celebrate his appointment.

'As for her orders,' said Jack, 'I care little whither we are sent, because it is certain that there will be hot work to do, wherever we go. The French, they say, are strong in North American waters, and they are reported to be fitting out a great fleet at Toulon; they are also reported to be collecting troops at Boulogne and at Havre for embarkation, no doubt for the invasion of the English coast, if they pluck up spirit enough. Well, Bess, we shall be among them, never fear.'

There was, as many will remember, a great scare at this time that the French were preparing to invade us, and there were some who talked mournfully of another Battle of Hastings and of King Louis coming over to be crowned at Westminster Abbey. The

smugglers (who in times of peace are hanged, but in times of war are courted) reported great preparations along the French coast, though not, so far as could be learned, comparable with the gathering of men and material they made in the year 1745, when they were preparing to back up the Pretender. Nevertheless, the danger was thought to be so pressing that everything else must be neglected while the Government provided for the home defence; and the 'Tartar' (though this we knew not yet) was destined to join the Channel Fleet. Meantime, as is mere matter of history, the French very leisurely put to sea from Toulon, with the finest fleet, I think, that the world had ever seen, and had plenty of time to take Minorca. Then followed the unlucky Admiral Byng's famous engagement with the Marquis de la Galissonnière, which, though we call it an inconclusive action, the French have construed into a most glorious victory. Never can one forget the rage of the people, and the cry for revenge that rose up from every coffee-house, from every tavern, from the Royal Exchange, filled with great merchants, and the mughouse, filled with porters, and wherever men do assemble together. A bad beginning of the war it was; and all that year, except for the execution of the Admiral, we had nothing to cheer us. Even this, though a sop for the rage of the nation, was a poor consolation, because no sooner was it done than men began to ask themselves whether, after all, the Admiral had not done his duty. There were floods of epigrams and verses written, it is true, both upon Byng and De la Galissonnière—if they may be considered a consolation. In time of defeat and disgrace, the soul is soothed, at least, when something biting has been said upon the cause or author of the shame. This is an art greatly practised by the French, who have always found in its exercise a peculiar satisfaction for their many disgraces both by sea and land, and for the loss of all their liberties. And for the sake of a good epigram they are said to go cheerfully even to the Bastille.

At this time, besides the preparations for invasion, which were perhaps exaggerated, the Channel swarmed with French privateers, and these full of courage and spirit. At the first outset, and until we had taught them a lesson or two, they were bold enough to attack anything, without considering disparity of numbers, that flew the English flag. Had the French King's Navy been handled with as much resolution as these privateers, commanded and manned often by simple fishermen, the result of the war might have been very different. They put to sea in vessels of all kinds: nothing came amiss for a craft of war with Letters of Marque when these rogues first went a-privateering; nothing, in their earliest flush of success, seemed too small or too badly armed for a venture against the richly laden, slow-sailing English merchantmen, which, taken by surprise, offered at the beginning of the war, it must be confessed, but a cowardly resistance. Again, nothing was too big to be fully manned and equipped. Every craft that lay in the ports, from Dunquerque to Bordeaux, became a privateer,

from a simple fishing-smack, a fast-sailing schooner, an unarmed sloop carrying two or four six-pound carronades and thirty or forty men, to a tall frigate of thirty guns, well gunned, and manned by three hundred sturdy devils, emboldened by the chance of plunder, and eager to attack everything, from an East Indiaman to a potato coaster. Very good service was done during the course of this war by our own privateers, of whom there were presently a great many, though it must be owned that the French beat us both for the number of their piratical craft and their success. Certainly, they had a better chance, since for every French merchantman there are fifty English. We were always capturing their privateers, but their number never seemed to lessen, however many lay in our prisons. Why, in one year—I think it was the year 1761—we took no few than 117 privateers, manned by 5,000 sailors; yet, in the same year, in spite of our conquests, we lost over 800 merchantmen, taken from us by these hornets swarming under our very noses.

'Kiss me, Bess,' said Jack; 'we sail on Sunday, or Monday at latest. Kiss me again, my girl. Our orders have come. We join the Channel Fleet, where there will be rubs for some, as is quite certain.'

'Among the privateers, Jack?' Bess was as brave a girl as any—yet she shuddered, thinking of this dangerous service, in which one has not to take part in a great battle once in the cruise, and so home again to brag about the broadsides and the grape-shot, but to fight daily, perhaps, and always with a desperate crew, whose only chance is victory or escape. 'Well'—for his eyes clouded at the first appearance of fear in her face—'if thou art happy, Jack, then I will try to be happy too. Alas! why cannot women go into battle with their lovers? I could fire a pistol, and I think I could thrust a pike with any who threatened thee, Jack. But we must still sit at home and wait.'

'Now you talk nonsense, Bess. Do you think I could fight with thee at my side? Why, I should tremble the whole time, lest a splinter should tear thy tender limbs. Nay, my dear; sit at home and wait, for there is nothing else to do. And sometimes think of thy lover. Let me read the future in thine eyes.' She turned them to him obediently, and as if the future really could be read in those great black eyes. 'I see, my dear, a sailor coming home again, safe and sound, prize-money in his pocket, promotion awaiting him. His girl waits for him at home. He rushes into her arms and kisses her—thus, my dear, and thus, a thousand times. Then he buys her a house as fine as the Admiral's, and furnishes it for her with his prize-money; and there is a garden for salads and for fruit. She shall eat off china—no more pewter then. She will have the finest pew in church and the most loving husband at home, and—what? I see a dozen boys and girls; and every boy in His Majesty's service, and every girl married to a sailor. There shall be no woman in the world handsomer or happier. Give me a kiss again, my dear.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SAILOR'S CHARM.

THAT evening Bess did a thing which is forbidden by the Church; in what part of the Prayer Book I do not know, but I have always understood that it is prohibited as a grievous sin. She went to seek the advice of a witch.

The sailors and their wives sometimes importuned Mr. Brinjes to bestow upon them, or to sell them if he would, some kind of charm or amulet, either to maintain constancy in separation (this charm, though largely in request, is, if all reports are true, of small efficacy), to prevent drowning, against incurring the wrath of the captain, and punishment by the cat-o'-nine-tails, against being killed or wounded in action, and against hanging: which may happen to any, though there are fewer sailors hanged than landsmen. Sometimes, if he was in good temper, or if the applicant was a young woman of pleasing appearance, Mr. Brinjes would consent, and send her away happy, with something in a bag which he called a charm. Whether he himself believed in his charms I know not, but there are still living some who declare that they have escaped hurt or drowning wholly through the efficacy of the apothecary's charm. Yet if a man hath this power, why should he not be so patriotic and benevolent as to extend it over the whole of His Majesty's Navies, so that not a sailor among them all should ever be shot, drowned, flogged, or cast away? It is like the arrogance of the Papist priests, who profess to be able to forgive sins. Why not then forgive at once, both great and small, mortal and venial, all that the world, living or dead, hath committed, and so make mankind whole? Whatever his belief concerning his own powers, Mr. Brinjes, without doubt, entertained a high respect of those of Castilla's black nurse Philadelphy—a true witch if ever there was one.

'I know not,' my father once said on this subject, 'whether the practice of magic hath in it anything real, or whether the whole is imposture and superstitious credulity. The Bible doth not teach us clearly one way or the other. Yet, by implication, we may understand that the arts of sorcery were in old times practised successfully, otherwise there would not have been promulgated commandments so express against those who work hidden arts, practise divination, inquire of a familiar spirit, consult the dead, or fabricate charms. And certainly it hath been the belief in all ages, and among every race of whom we have knowledge, that power may be magically obtained by men whereby they may compel the help of demons and spirits, and in some way foretell the future. Nebuchadnezzar divined with arrows; the false prophets deceived the people with amulets; the Bene Kedem, the Chaldeans, the Philistines, and the Chosen People in their backsliding worked hidden arts; Pharaoh's magicians turned their rods into serpents;

Rachel carried away his Teraphim from her father, Laban. What forbids us to believe that sorcery may still be living in our midst, though lurking in dark corners for fear of the law and of the righteous wrath of pious men?'

The old negro woman knew, of a certainty, many secrets, whether they were those of the Black Art or no. Mr. Brinjes would talk to her in her own Mandingo language, which he had acquired while on the West Coast of Africa. She it was who assisted him in the compounding of those broths which used to simmer on his hob, to be tasted by the shuddering assistant. By these and other secrets of which he was always in search, and forced the woman to reveal by terror of his magic stick with the skull, he hoped to cure disease, to arrest decay, and to prolong life. I suppose that it was by conversation with him that Bess was led to consider Philadelphy as much wiser in witchcraft than Mr. Brinjes. Therefore she resolved to consult her, and went to her that very evening with all the money she had in the world—namely, a crown-piece and a groat.

The negroes of the Admiral's household occupied quarters of their own, built for them without the house, in West Indian fashion, containing a common kitchen and sleeping-rooms. Here Bess found three of the men, one of them being on guard, with the old woman. They were squatted on the floor, in the kitchen, round a dish containing their supper—a mess of cuscoosoo, which is made of flour roasted by some art, in small grains, and served with salt fish, onions, red pepper, and butter; a strong-tasting food, but not displeasing to the palate nor unwholesome. Every race has its own dish. The Spaniards have their olla-podrida; the Hindoos, their rice; the Chinese, their bird's-nest soup and dried sea-slugs; and the Mandingoes, their cuscoosoo. There was no other light in the room than the glow of a great coal fire, which these negroes love to have burning all the year round, and in the winter never willingly leave. As for candles, why should negro servants have luxuries which poor white folk cannot afford to buy? Candles are for those who wish to read, play music, cards, and practise the polite accomplishments; not for those who sit about the fire for warmth.

'Hi!' said Philadelphy, looking up curiously, ''tis Bess, the Penman's girl.'

'I want to speak with you, Philadelphy,' said Bess.

The old woman nodded, and the men rose, took up the dish of cuscoosoo and retired, as if they were accustomed to these consultations, and knew that their absence was expected. A witch must, in fact, be quite alone with those who inquire of her.

When they were gone the old woman crept closer to the fire, the light of which seemed to sink into her skin, and there to become absorbed (the blackness of Philadelphy's cheeks not being shiny, as is that of some negresses, but dull); while her eyes shone by the firelight like two balls of fire.

What is it, dearie?' she asked. 'Is thy lover inconstant?'

'How do you know I have a lover?'

'It is written on thy face and in thine eyes, dearie.'

'I have come for a charm,' she replied, blushing to think that she carried her secret written on her face so that all could read.

'Hush! The Admiral, he say, "No charms here, Philadelphy." Whisper. What kind of charm? Is it a charm to make thy sweetheart love thee?'

'He loves me already.' Bess hesitated a little. Then she added, 'He is a sailor. I want a charm for a sailor.'

'I sell very fine charm—proper gri-gri charm. Eh! When Massa Brinjes wants pow'ful charm for gout and toothache he sends for Philadelphy, and puts his skull-stick on the table. Then I give him what he wants. I got charm for 'most everything. Massa Brinjes very good Obeah Doctor: he learn in Mandingo country when he lived among the rovers. Hi! Fine times the rovers had before they were all hanged up. Hi! But he dunnow so much as old Philadelphy. When he want to learn mus' come to de ole woman. Hi!' As she spoke, her eyes rolling about so that the whites in the firelight were glowing red, she held out her hand for the money, but went on talking and asking questions without waiting for a reply. 'Mus' come to de ole woman. Everybody come to de old woman. Some day I die—what you do then? Hi! What kind of charm you want? I sell very fine charm. Will you buy charm for true love? Once your man get that charm upon him he can't even look at another woman. That charm make all other women ole and ugly. Hi! Tell me, dearie, will you have that charm? I sell charm again' drowning—no man drown with my charm on him. Will you buy that charm? I sell charm again, shot and sword. No man ever killed who carry my charm. I sell charm to bring him home again. Hi! You like your sweetheart come home again? How much money you got for de ole woman, dearie?'

'I've got a crown and a groat. Is that enough?'

'Give it to me!' She clutched the money greedily. 'S'pose you rich lady, too little. S'pose you poor girl, 'nuff for kind ole Philadelphy.'

'Will the money buy all the charms?'

'Buy all?' The old witch laughed scornfully. 'She think she a queen, this girl, for sure. Buy all? Dearie, if your crown and your groat was a bag of golden guineas you couldn't buy but only one charm.'

'Then, if I can only have one, which shall it be?'

'Take the love charm, dearie. That the best for ev'ry girl.'

'No,' said Bess, proudly, 'I will not buy a love charm. If my sweetheart cannot remain constant without a charm to keep him, I want no more of him. Well . . . then . . . he might be drowned. But he has passed through so many dangers already that I do not think he will ever be drowned. He might be killed

in action. Let him come home safe and sound, whether he loves me or not. Yes; I will have the charm against killing and wounding.'

'Most girls,' said the old woman, 'rather see their sweethearts die than be false.'

'I will have the charm against shot and cutlass,' said Bess.

'Very well. I make fine gri-gri—pow'ful charm. Hi! charm to turn aside every bullet. You wait.'

Then the old woman rose slowly, being, in spite of her magic powers, unable to charm away her own rheumatism, and fumbled in her pocket, a vast sack hanging beneath her dress, which contained as many things, and as various, as a housewife's cupboard. From the rubbish lying in its vast recesses she produced a small leather bag, apparently empty, tied with a long string, which, after securing the bag with half a dozen knots, was long enough to be slipped round the neck. To untie these knots and to open the bag was to destroy the whole charm. More than this, it was to invite the very danger which was sought to be averted. Two or three years afterwards I was present when the bag was opened. It contained nothing more than a small piece of parchment, inscribed with certain characters, which I believe to have been Arabic, and very likely a verse of the False Prophet Mohammed's book, the Koran; there was the head of a frog, dried; the leg-bone of some animal, which may have been a cat or a rabbit; the claw of some wild creature, a nutmeg, and a piece of clay. This was a famous collection of weapons to interpose between a man's body and a cannon-shot.

'Take the bag in your hand,' said the old woman. 'Now go down on your knees and shut your eyes, and take care not to open them whatever you hear or feel, while you say the words after me—

Shot and bullet pass him by;
Pike and cutlass strike in vain;
Keep him safe though all may die;
Bring my sweetheart home again.'

Bess did as she was commanded, holding the bag in her hand, and keeping her eyes tightly closed, while she repeated these words on her knees. She declared afterwards that while she said the words there was a rushing and whirling of the air about her ears and a cold breath upon her face, and, which was strange, though she held the bag tightly by the neck, she felt that things were being dropped inside it.

'Now, honey,' said the old woman, 'gri-gri done made. You open eyes and stand up.'

So Bess obeyed, looking about her, fearfully. But there was nothing to see, and the old woman was now crouching beside the fire again. But the bag, which had been empty when she took it in her hand, was now filled with something.

'Give your lover,' said Philadelphy, 'this bag. Hang it round his neck. And say the words again, with your eyes shut and his as well. Let him never take it off or look inside it, or tell anybody of it. Hi! you very fine girl, for sure; yet sometimes men go away and forget. Hi! Den you fly roun' like a wild cat in a trap. Well, dearie, come to me s'pose he does go untrue. I make beautiful figure for girls when sweethearts prove false: put them fo' the fire, an' stick pins into them. Den he all over pain.' Bess told me that she thought of Aaron, and of a way to punish him; but, fortunately, she had no more money, else I fear that Aaron would have passed a bad winter.

When she had the charm, the old woman offered to tell her for nothing, by several methods, the fortune of her lover. All her methods led to surprising results, as you shall hear; and then Bess went away, carrying with her the precious bag. The next thing was to persuade Jack into putting it on. Now, every sailor is full of superstition; and the bravest man afloat is not above carrying a charm if one is given to him. But, of course, he would not have it known.

'Jack,' said Bess, 'don't be angry with me for what I have done.'

'What have you done, child?'

'I've been . . . I've been—Jack—to a witch. Oh! a real witch! But she does not know your name or anything about you. And I've got a charm for you! Here it is!' She lugged the precious thing out of her bosom. 'No, Jack; don't touch it yet. You must never try to open it or to find out the secret of what is inside it, or else the charm will be broken. And, Jack—promise me—promise me—— If you will wear this round your neck, close to your skin, you shall never be hit by shot nor shell.'

Jack laughed: but he took the little black bag out of her hand, and looked at it doubtfully.

'Why,' he said, 'as for such a trumpery thing as this—is it worth the trouble of hanging it about one's neck?'

'I might have had a charm to keep you safe from drowning, Jack; but I thought that you have had so many dangers already that there can be no more for you. And I might have had one to keep you true to me; but oh! Jack, what good would it do to me if you are true only to be killed? Besides, if you cannot keep true to me without a charm, you cannot love me as you say you do—yes, Jack, I know you do. I scorn witchery to keep my lover true.'

'A lock of thy hair, Bess, is all I ask. I will tie that round my wrist. 'Twill be quite enough to keep me true, and to save me from drowning, and to turn aside the bullets.'

There is, indeed, a common superstition among sailors that a lock of their mistress's hair tied round the wrist will carry them safely through the action.

'You shall have a lock of my hair as well, Jack. Oh! you

should have it all if I thought it would keep you safe. Only let me hang this round your neck. There: now I take off the cravat and unbutton the shirt, and drop it in—so. Shut your eyes, and keep them shut, while I say—

Shot and bullet pass him by;
Pike and cutlass strike in vain;
Keep him safe though all may die;
Bring my lover home again.'

No phenomena attended this incantation.

'And now, Jack,' Bess said, 'you can open your eyes again. Cannon shot shall not harm thee; bullet shall turn aside; sword and pike shall not be able to do my dearie hurt.'

'Tis woman's foolishness, Bess. Yet have I heard strange stories about these old negresses. They are sold to the Devil, I believe. The charm can do no harm, if it do no good. One would not go into action with an advantage over one's shipmates. Yet it is well to be on the safe side; no man knows what power these old women may have acquired; and every man has his true-love knot for a charm. Well, Bess, to please thee, my dear, I will wear it.'

'Then, Jack, I can let thee go with a lighter heart. When the wind blows I shall tremble, but not when I hear of sea-fights and the roaring cannon.'

'Some men carry a Testament,' said Jack. 'Many a bullet has been stopped by a Testament, which is natural, as against the Devil and all his works, of which the Frenchman and the Spaniard are the chief. Some of them carry a caul to escape drowning. But they commonly get shot; though why a caul should attract the bullets, or whether it is better to be shot or drowned, I know not. But give me a true-love knot, my girl, to keep me safe, with a lock of thy black hair to tie about my arm, and a kiss of thy dear lips for charm to keep me true. And tell no one about this charm of the black witch.'

She let down her long and beautiful hair, which fell below her waist, and cut off a lock three feet long. Then Jack bared his arm —why, the love-sick lad had tattooed it all over with the name of Bess. There was Bess between an anchor and a crown, Bess between two swords, Bess under a Union Jack—well, there could be no denying, for the rest of his life, his vows of love for Bess. She laughed to see these signs of passion, and tied her lock of hair round and round his arm, securing the two ends tightly with green silk. With this, which is every woman's amulet, and the old witch's charm, surely her Jack would be safe.

In everything that followed Jack continued to wear this charm about his neck both by day and night. It is, we know, most certain that this superstition concerning amulets is vain and mischievous. How can a witch by any devilry preserve a man from lead and steel? How can a leopard's claw and a verse from a so-called

sacred book stand between a man and the death that is ordered for him? To think this is surely grievous sin and folly. Besides, it is strictly forbidden to have any doings with witches; and what was forbidden to the people of old cannot be lawful among ourselves. Yet one cannot but remark, as a singular coincidence, that in all his fighting Jack had never a wound or a scratch. Perhaps, however, his escape had nothing to do with the gri-gri.

'When I had gotten the charm,' the girl went on, 'I asked Philadelphy to tell my sweetheart's fortune. So she said she would read me his fortune for nothing, and she drew the cards from her pocket, and spread them out upon the table, and began to arrange them. Then she pushed all together and began again. Then she told me she would go no further until I told her who was my sweetheart, because she saw an officer with a sword.'

'Go on,' said Jack.

'Oh! It is wonderful! I told her he was a sailor; but as for his name, that mattered nothing. So she began again, and told me. The fortune began so well that it was marvellous; and then she stopped and mumbled something, and said that there was a coil which she did not understand, but she thought she saw—she said she thought she saw—the Devil, Jack, and herself as well. And she could not read the fortune because she could not understand any word of it. But it was the most surprising fortune in the world, whether good or bad. Then she asked me to look in her eyes, and she would read my own fortune there. Can you read my fortune there, Jack?'

'I see two Lieutenants of His Majesty's Navy in those eyes, Bess. Is that fortune enough for you? One in each eye. Is not that enough for a girl?'

'They are but one, my dear,' she said.

'And what was the fortune that she told you, Bess?'

'She said, "Come what may come, thou shalt marry thy lover." So I am satisfied. Come what may come. What care I what may come?—oh! what can come that will harm me?—so that I keep the man I love? What more can I desire? What more can I ask? I am so poor that I can lose nothing. Fortune cannot hurt me. And come what may come, I shall keep the man I love. You will come back to me, Jack, and I shall have—oh! I shall have—my heart's desire.'

It was on Saturday morning that the ship dropped down the river with wind and tide, her company and armament complete, new rigged, new painted, fresh and sweet as a lady just from her dressing-room, while the cannon roared the parting salute. I remember that it was a misty morning in December, a light south-west breeze, and the sun like a great red copper pan or round shield in the sky. And as the ship slowly slipped down Greenwich Reach the shrouds and the sails shone like gold, and were magnified by the mist.

The Admiral stood on the quay with Castilla, and with them Mr. Brinjes.

'Go thy way, Jack,' said the old sailor. 'Go thy way, and do thy duty.—Castilla, my dear, there is only one good thing for a man—'tis to sail away from the land of thieves and land-sharks, out into blue water to fight the French.'

'And what is good for a woman, sir?'

'Why, my child, to marry the man who goes to sea. Farewell, Jack! Maybe we shall never see thee more. Let us go home, Castilla.'

I went on board, an hour before they sailed. Jack could do no more than whisper a word as he held me by the hand. Oh! Heavens! my heart leaps up within me, even now, as I remember those eyes of his, so full of love and tenderness. 'Take care of her, Luke'—this was what he said—'take care of her until I come home to marry her. My pretty Bess! 'Tis a loving heart, Luke. She is thy charge, lad. Good-bye, dear lad, good-bye!'

I knew that she must be sitting in the old summer-house waiting to see the ship go by; and there, indeed, I found her. Jack parted with her early in the morning. I know not what passed between them; but it was surely very moving, because no pair loved each other more deeply than these two.

'He is gone,' she said. 'It is all over. But he loves me. Oh! I am sure he loves me. Yet something will happen. Philadelphy saw the Devil and herself. Between the two something is sure to happen. Oh! we shall never be so happy again together—never again.'

'Why,' I told her, 'people always think that the future can never be like the past. There are plenty of happy days before you, Bess. Jack will come home again some time, maybe a First Lieutenant—who knows?—or a Captain in command. Then we shall have peace, I suppose, once more, and Jack will remain ashore, and you will be his wife.'

'Yes. What did Philadelphy say? Come what may come, thou shalt marry thy lover. Oh! I am not afraid. I saw him on the quarter-deck as the ship sailed past. Oh! he is the bravest and the handsomest man in all the King's service; and who am I that he should love me? Luke, you know how ladies talk and what they say. Teach me that way. Oh! Luke, teach me, so that he shall never be ashamed of his sweetheart. My Jack! my sailor Jack! Steel nor lead shall not harm him; but the ship may wreck or sink. Oh! my heart, my heart! When shall I see thy dear face again?'

CHAPTER XXIV.

AFTER JACK'S DEPARTURE.

When Jack was gone I suppose that Deptford remained just as full of noise and business as before. As much hammering went on in the Yard: there was as much piping and shouting on the river; there was as much drinking and bawling in the town. But to some of us the place seemed to have become suddenly and strangely quiet. Our Lieutenant had been ashore three or four months in all, yet he filled the town with his presence, a thing which only strong and masterful men can do. Most of us when we go are not missed at all, and our places are quickly filled up, whether we sail away to sea upon a cruise or are carried to the grave.

Whoever is absent, the events of the days continue to follow each other and to occupy the minds of those who wait at home. 'Twas a stirring time, and though others, and worse, have followed, and we are even now in a great war, the issue of which no man can predict, it seems to me that those years were more full of interest than any which have followed. Why, one remembers even the things that are most readily forgotten: how, for instance, the 'Speedwell' yacht moved against wind and tide, and beat four miles an hour; how four tradesmen of the City were in a pleasure-boat off Margate when they were picked up by a French privateer and ransomed for three hundred and twenty pounds; how the wounded soldiers were brought home and carried through the town in waggons; how the recruits quartered in the Savoy mutinied, and were quickly shot down; how Mary Walker, of Rotherhithe, was barbarously murdered and her niece hanged for the crime (though there were many who wept for the poor girl, and believed her protestations of innocence, which she continued, with cries and tears, to the very end); how seventy men of the 'Namur' walked all the way from Portsmouth to the Admiralty to complain of their rations, and fifteen were hanged for punishment; and how—a thing which pleased me much—there was a great sale of pictures, at which a Claude Lorraine fetched as much as a hundred guineas, a Correggio £40, a Rubens £79, and a Raphael over £700. But these are now old stories, though then they made talk for the world.

Bess, keeping mostly at home, applied herself diligently to acquire the arts of reading and writing, so that her lover might never be accused of marrying an illiterate woman. These arts, mastered even in childhood with great difficulty and painful labour, are far more difficult to acquire after one has arrived at maturity. By great patience, however, Bess so far succeeded that, after two years' application, she was able to make her way slowly through a page of large and clear print, leaving out the hard words. This achievement satisfied her, because she was not in the least degree curious concerning the contents of books, and did not desire infor-

mation on any subject whatever. She also learned to write her own name, her father teaching her; 'twas, I remember, in a fine flowing hand, with flourishes after the Penman's style; but she could write nothing else, nor could she ever read the written character. To one who considers the ignorance of such a girl as Bess, who neither reads nor writes, doth not hear the talk of exchanges and coffee-rooms, and has never been to school, her mind must seem a state of darkness indeed. The whole of the world's history, except that portion of it which is connected with our Redeemer, is entirely unknown to her. Geography, present politics, the exact sciences, the fine arts, poetry, and letters—all these things are words, and nothing more, to her. Such was this girl's ignorance, and such was her apathy as regards knowledge, that she desired to learn nothing except what would please her sweetheart. With this end in view she used to lay out the charts on the apothecary's table, and would make Mr. Brinjes tell her about all the ports at which Jack had touched and the seas over which he had sailed. 'I love Jack,' was all the burden of her song. He was never out of her mind: the world might go to wrack and she would care nothing if only her lover remained in safety and was brought back to her arms.

She begged me to tell her what other things, if any, a gentlewoman generally learns, so that she might teach herself these things as well. Willingly would I have done this, but on inquiry I could not discover anything—I mean any serious study—which was necessary or possible for her to undertake. I knew but one gentlewoman with whom to compare Bess. This was Castilla. Certainly, Castilla had commenced the study of the French language; but I know not how far she advanced, and I have not learned that she was ever able to read a book in that tongue. Then, in the matter of arts and sciences, Castilla was certainly as ignorant as Bess. And when I came to consider the subject, I could not discover that she was any fonder than Bess of reading, or more desirous to extend her knowledge by means of books. There are, it is true, certain accomplishments in which a young gentlewoman is instructed. Castilla had learned to dance, and in the Assembly there were none who performed a minuet with more grace, though some perhaps with more stateliness, because she was short of stature. In a country dance she had no equal. But Bess, for her part, who had never been taught by any dancing-master, could dance a jig, a hay, or a hornpipe, rolling like a sailor, snapping her fingers, and singing the while, so as to do your eyes good only to see the unstudied grace and spirit of her movements. Then Castilla had been taught the harpsichord, and could play at least three, if not four, tunes. But Bess had never even seen a harpsichord, and as she did not possess one she could not be taught to play upon it. Then, there is singing. Nothing is more pleasant to the ear than the singing of a beautiful woman. Castilla had a low voice, but it was sweet and musical; she had been taught to sing by the same master who had

taught her the harpsichord, and she could sing several songs. To please my father, she used to sing, 'Drink to me only with thine eyes'; to please the Admiral she sang, 'To all you ladies now on land'; to please me she sang, 'Sweet, if you love me, let me go'; and all so charmingly, never dropping a note, making no mistakes in word or tune, and with such grace of voice and pretty gentle way that it ravished those who heard her. But as for Bess, she had a full rich voice, and she sang out loud, so that she might have been heard half-way across the river. She knew fifty songs, and was always learning new ones. She would listen to the ballad-singer in the street, and to the sailors bawling in the taverns, and would then go away and practise their songs by herself till she was perfect. She sang them all to please Jack; but after he was gone she sang no more—sitting mum, like a moulting canary-bird. It was pretty to listen while she sang, sitting with one hand upon Jack's shoulder, and the other clasped in his love-sick fingers—

> The landlord he looks very big,
> With his high cocked hat and his powdered wig;
> Methinks he looks both fair and fat,
> But he may thank you and me for that.
> For oh! good ale, thou art my darling,
> And my joy both night and morning.

Or, sometimes, 'Why, soldiers, why should we be melancholy, boys?' or, 'Come, all ye sailors bold, lend me an ear.' Another was a plaintive ditty, the choice of which we may believe to have been inspired in some prophetic mood—

> Early one morning, just as the sun was rising,
> I heard a maid sing in the valley below:
> 'Oh! don't deceive me. Oh! never leave me.
> How could you use a poor maiden so?'

As regards housewifery, Castilla could make conserves, cakes, puddings, and fruit pies, and she could distil strong waters for the still-room. Bess, for her part, could make bread, pies of all kinds, including sea-pie, onion pie, salmagundy, and lobscouse; she could cook a savoury dish of liver, lights, and bacon, of beef-steak and onions, of ducks stuffed: she could make tansy puddings, and many other pleasant things for dinner. She could also brew beer, and had many secrets in flavouring it with hops, ivy-berries, yew-berries, and other things. As for needlework, Castilla could, it is true, embroider flowered aprons, and do Turkey work, and tent-stitch, work handkerchiefs in catgut, and such pretty things. But Bess could knit stockings for her father or herself; she made her own frocks and trimmed her own straw hats. As to playing cards, Castilla knew a great many games, such as Quadrille, Whist, Ombre, Pope Joan, and Speculation; but Bess, for her part, could play All-fours, Put, Snip-snap-snorum, Laugh-and-lie-down, and Crib-bage. Then—but this signified little—Castilla collected shells, which

were brought to the house by sailors, and made grottoes; she could also cut out figures, and even landscapes, in black paper; she could make screens by sticking pictures on paper; and she knew several pretty girls' games, such as Draw-gloves, and Questions and Command. Bess knew none of these little accomplishments; and as for games, she loved best the boys' sports, such as Tagg and Thrush-a-thrush, which she used to play with Jack and me when we were young. The chief difference, so far as I could understand, in the education of the two girls, was that one could carry a fan, manage a hoop, and behave after the manner of gentlewomen, which the other could not do. And I could not recommend Bess either to put on a hoop, or to buy a fan, or to powder and paint, or to lay on patches, by all of which things she would have made herself ridiculous.

There are some things, however, which cannot be learned. Such are sweetness of disposition, that finer kind of modesty which belongs to gentle breeding, grace of carriage, respect to elders, and the equal distribution of favours and smiles, so as not to show too openly the secret preferences of the heart. In all these things Bess was naturally inferior to Castilla, and these, unfortunately, I could not teach her, nor could Mr. Brinjes.

I could therefore advise her nothing but to study at every opportunity, and especially in church, the carriage and demeanour of the quality and the fashion of their dress, which I recommended her to adopt at such a distance as her means and station would allow.

You may be sure that there were many at Deptford who waited anxiously for news of the 'Tartar'—most of the crew belonging to the town, and none of them being pressed men, but all volunteers, who took the King's bounty. But for three or four months we heard nothing. Then news came to the Dockyard, and was taken to the Club in the evening by the Resident Commissioner.

'Admiral,' he said, 'and gentlemen all, I bring you good news: 'Tis of the "Tartar."'

'Good news?' cried the Admiral. 'Then the boy is well! Bring more punch, ye black devil!'

'The "Tartar" has put into Spithead with a thumping prize. Twelve men killed, and the master and mate. Twenty wounded, but only the Second Lieutenant among the officers, and he slightly.'

'This is brave hearing, gentlemen,' said the Admiral.

'The prize is a privateer from Rochelle, 20 guns and 170 men. She made, it is reported, a gallant resistance. No doubt, we shall have further particulars by private despatches.'

In two days there came by the post two letters, both from Jack. One of these was for the Admiral, which I do not transcribe, although I was privileged to read it; and another, for me. I knew very well that the letter was not for me, but for another. Wherefore I made an excuse for not opening it before the company, and

carried it off to Mr. Brinjes, where I found Bess sitting, as was her wont in the afternoon.

'I have heard,' she said, 'that there has been fighting on board the "Tartar." The people in the town are talking about it.'

'Jack is safe, and the "Tartar" has taken a prize, Bess; and here is a letter.'

So I tore it open in her presence. It was exactly as I thought. That is to say, there were a few words directing me to give the inclosed packet to his dear girl, the mistress of his heart; and she very joyfully received it, snatching it out of my hands with a strange jealousy, as if she grudged that anybody should have in his hands, even for a minute, what belonged to her and was a gift from her lover. It was the same with everything, down to the smallest ribbon which Jack gave her—she could not bear that another should so much as touch it, even a man. As for a woman being allowed to look at her lover's gifts—well, it was a jealous creature, but she loved him.

First, like a mad thing, she fell to kissing the letter. 'Oh!' she cried, holding it with both hands, but kindly permitting me to scent its fragrance, which was, to say the truth, like a mixture of bilge-water, lamp-oil, cheese, rum, and gunpowder. 'Oh, it actually smells of the ship!' In fact, the letter, no doubt from having been written on paper long kept below with the purser's stores, smelt of that part of the ship where the stores are kept. 'It is just like violets,' she added; but the smell of Jack's ship was better to her than that of any violets. And so she kissed it again.

'Shall we read it?' I said. 'The letter, I suppose, was meant to be read as well as to be kissed.'

She gave it to me reluctantly. I do not think she wanted to know the contents. Enough that Jack had written her a letter. What greater proof of love could be given to any girl?

'Do you think he *wanted* it to be read?' she asked. 'Wouldn't he be contented if he knew that I had it safe and was keeping it next to my heart, against his coming home?'

'You are a fool, Bess,' said Mr. Brinjes; 'let Luke read it. Why, the letter will tell us all about the fighting. Why else should he take the trouble to write a letter at all? Do you think a man likes writing letters? As for me, I never received a letter in my life, and I never wrote one.'

She gave up the letter with a sigh. If she had been able to read it herself, no one else would have seen it.

'Jack having taken so much trouble,' Mr. Brinjes continued, 'twould be disrespectful not to read it. What he writes to you, my girl, he writes for me as well.'

'Mistress of my heart,' I began, reading the letter. 'Is that meant for you, Mr. Brinjes?'

'Except a word or two just to show that he hasn't forgotten you, Bess, of course. Why, as for that, such words mean nothing except that the boy is in love. I've known a man so bewitched

with love as to call a half-naked black wench his goddess and his nymph. Yet it seemed to please the girl. Go on, Luke.'

'Mistress of my heart'—while I read, Bess sat in the window seat, her hands clasped, her eyes soft and melting, her breath caught short and quick, and continually interrupting with ejaculations—such as, 'Oh, Jack!' and 'Oh, my brave boy!'—wrung from her heart by the joy of loving and being loved. But these I omit.

'Mistress of my heart and queen of my soul! My dearest Bess,—Since I sailed from Deptford, I have thought of you every day and every night. If I were by your side I should give you a thousand hugs and kisses. There never was a more lovely maid than my Bess. My dear, we have had our first tussle, and warm work it was; but the enemy is now snug and comfortable under hatches, where he will remain until we come to anchor in the Solent, and carry him up Porchester Creek to rest awhile. I think he has got a headache, Bess, after the noise of the guns; and, perhaps, the small shot have given him a toothache, and the cannon-balls have very likely made his legs rheumatic. We had a fine time the last bout ashore, hadn't we, Bess? I sha'n't forget the room behind the shop, nor the summer-house where Luke caught us kissing, and you blushed crimson. Well, I dare say I shall get ashore again some time, though not, I hope, like our poor carpenter's mate, who has had both legs amputated, and will now for ever go on stumps. If your Jack came home on stumps, would you send him about his business, Bess? We fell in with the enemy——'

'Here the letter begins,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'What went before was like the froth on a pot of stingo.'

'We fell in with the enemy on the morning of the 18th, this being February the 20th. We should have missed her altogether, but, by the blessing of Providence, the fog cleared away and showed us the ship, half a mile or thereabouts on the weather-bow. 'Twas in full Channel. She hoisted the French flag, and we returned the compliment—such was our politeness—with a cannon-shot, pitched a yard or two wide of her. The enemy scorned to show her heels (wherefore I honour her, and give her what is due); perhaps because she carried heavier weight of metal and a larger complement than the "Tartar." As for the engagement which followed, it lasted for an hour or thereabouts; and then, on our coming to close quarters and preparing to board, Monsieur hauled down his colours, finding he had no stomach for pikes and cutlasses. Which was his stratagem; and mark the treachery of this bloody villain. For, while we prepared leisurely and unsuspecting to take possession, he bore up suddenly and boarded us. Fortunately, he had to deal with a well-disciplined crew; but the fighting was hand-to-hand for a while before they gave up the job and tried to back again to their own deck. There were fifty of them in the boarding-party, and not one got back, nor never a prisoner made, such was the rage of our men. So we gave them no more chance for treachery, but boarded in our turn; and hand-to-hand it was again till all that was left of them

were driven under hatches, where they now remain. There were a hundred and seventy of them when the action began, and we've thrown eighty bodies overboard. Consequently there are ninety prisoners. Our master, who is as tough a sea-dog as lives, calculates that at this rate—namely, and that is to say, every ship in the King's service taking one French ship a week, killing or disabling half the crew, and taking prisoner the other half—we shall in less than a twelvemonth leave his French Majesty never a sailor or a ship to his back, so he must surrender at discretion. But I doubt, for my own part, whether we shall have such good luck as this; and it may be a year and a half or even two years before we are able to make an account of all the French fleets. We have lost twelve, killed and wounded; the Second Lieutenant has parted with half an ear, sliced off by a French cutlass, and the master's mate is killed, his brains being blown out by a pistol fired in his face. But we have revenged him, my dear Bess. When the fight was over I drank your health in the gun-room in a tot of rum, being, thank God, without a scratch.'

Here was a gap, as if the letter had been interrupted at this point, and resumed later on.

'We are now, my dearest Bess, anchored at Spithead, and about to transfer our prisoners up the harbour to Porchester Castle, where they are to lay by until the war is ended or they are exchanged. 'Twill be a change for them and a rest, and no doubt they will be glad to be out of danger. 'Tis a convenient place for a prison, having two great towers, besides a smaller one, with a high wall all round and a ditch. And if the prisoners do escape, they will find the country-side rejoiced of the opportunity to murder them, being a savage people, and much incensed with all French privateers. So, my sweetheart, no more at present from thy faithful JACK.

'Postscriptum.—Thy true-love knot is round my arm, and I wish my arm was round thy neck. I forgot to say that the prize is the "Mont Rozier," of La Rochelle; she is, we hope, to be purchased for the King's Navy—a handy useful ship, well found. Her captain was killed in the second part of the action. Otherwise I think he would have been hanged for treachery. I love thee, Bess—I love thee!'

There was a beautiful letter for any girl to receive; full of love and kisses, and of gallant fighting! When I had read it through, she sat awhile perfectly still, the tears running down her cheeks. Then she made me read it again, more slowly, and bade me mark with pencil the passages which most she fancied. She could not read the writing, but could rest her eyes on those places and remember them. She was quick at catching up and remembering things, and when she had heard the letter read a third time, she knew it all by heart, and never forgot it.

This was the only letter which Jack ever wrote to his mistress. Other letters he wrote to the Admiral, telling him of the wonderful exploits of the 'Tartar,' and of his share in the actions, but never

a word more to Bess. The days passed on, and the girl sat, for the most part, in silence, waiting. So sat Penelope, expectant of her lord. Still she spoke of him; still she carried his letter in her bosom, wrapped in silk, and would take it out and gaze upon it, the tears rolling down her cheek. If she hoped for another letter, if she felt herself neglected, if she doubted his fidelity, I know not; for she said nothing.

In that interval she grew more beautiful. Her face, thus set upon the contemplation of one thing, became pensive, and her eyes grave. She smiled seldom, and the loud laugh which Jack loved, but which reminded others too much of her former associates, was no more heard. By constant endeavour, by imitation, by refraining from her old companions, and by keeping guard over her speech, she softened not only her manner, but also her appearance. Poor Bess! What would she say and suffer if she should learn that her Jack had ceased to love her? Yet what other interpretation could be put upon his long silence? It was at Christmas, 1756, when the 'Tartar' sailed. It was in June, 1760, that Jack returned, and all that time only this one letter, though there had been many written to the Admiral.

'He will find,' said Bess, 'when he comes home, that I can read very well. And I know the charts of the seas where he has sailed. If only he still will think me beautiful.'

'Why, Bess,' I told her, 'as to beauty, there is no doubt about it. So if that is all there is to fear, have no pain on that score.' There was, however, a great deal more to fear; but this one dared not so much as to hint in her presence.

'There is a storm brewing,' said Mr. Brinjes; 'I feel it in the air. I know not what he may think when he comes home: she is a handsome creature, and he may be for beginning all over again. Yet my mind misgives me. Why is there no letter, nor never a word to you, unless he has forgotten her? As for falling in love with another woman, that is hardly likely, seeing the busy life the poor lad hath led. But he hath forgotten her, Luke. Most women look for nothing else than to be forgotten when their husbands and lovers go to sea; they forget and are forgotten. Well—why not? Better so; then they suffer the less when one of the men is knocked o' the head, and another goes off with someone else when his ship is next paid off. But Bess is different; and we have encouraged her; there will never be any other man in the world for her, except Jack. So, my lad, look out, I say, for squalls.'

Of course, we heard news of the 'Tartar.' Did she not fill half the Gazette? There never was so fortunate a ship, nor one more gallantly commanded. One cannot enumerate or remember half the prizes that she made in her first year's cruise in the Channel. A month after taking the 'Mont Rozier' she encountered the 'Maria Victoria,' twenty-four guns and 226 men; and, after a sharp engagement, compelled her to strike. The ship was taken over into the King's Navy, under the name of the 'Tartar's Prize.' Then, in

April, Captain Lockhart fought the privateer 'Duc d'Aiguillon,' of twenty-six guns and 254 men. The French did not surrender till they had lost upwards of fifty killed and wounded. In May the privateer 'Penelope,' of eighteen guns and 181 men, was taken; and in October the 'Comtesse de Gramont,' eighteen guns and 155 men. She also was purchased into the Navy. But the crown of the 'Tartar's' exploits this year was the chase and capture of the 'Melampe,' of Bayonne, one of the finest privateers ever sent out from port. She was mounted with thirty-six guns, and had a crew of 330 men. The 'Tartar' chased her for thirty hours, and fought her for three hours before she struck. She also was added to the King's Navy, as a thirty-six gun frigate; and a very useful vessel she proved.

Such achievements as these greatly disheartened the French, and raised our own spirits. They did not, it is true, quite reach the ambitious aims of the master of the 'Tartar'; yet they called forth the gratitude of the nation. Therefore, at the end of the year, the merchants of London and Bristol combined to present Captain Lockhart with pieces of plate; the First Lieutenant of the 'Tartar' was transferred to the command of the 'Tartar's' prize, the 'Melampe,' which was renamed the 'Sapphire'; Jack was transferred to this ship with the First Lieutenant; and the master of the 'Tartar' was promoted to be Lieutenant. As for the prize-money due to the officers and men, that amounted to a very pretty sum; but I do not know how much fell to Jack as his share.

CHAPTER XXV.

LIEUTENANT AARON FLETCHER.

We who are always slower than the French—'but,' said Jack, 'we hold on the tighter'—now began to send out privateers on our own account, though for the most part neither so numerous nor so well found as the French. The men were not wanting, nor the spirit, but the prizes were not so many, and the prospect of gain not so attractive to our English sea-coast men as to the French. Mention has been made of a ship building in Mr. Taylor's yard at Rotherhithe; Jack was right when he pronounced her fit for something better than a lubberly sugar-ship. She was, in fact, the venture of a company of London merchants, and she was intended from the first for Letters of Marque. A dangerous venture; but there was revenge in it, as well as the hope of profit; and, besides, two or three successful cruises will sometimes cover the whole cost of ship and crew, even if on the next voyage the ship is wrecked or taken. As for a crew, there is not much difficulty in getting volunteers for a privateer, where there is no flogging, and for the most part no discipline, and an officer has very little more authority than he can

command with fist and rope's-end. The prospect of taking some rich merchantman from Martinique, laden with a great cargo of spices and sugar, is attractive, to say nothing of the fighting, the chance of which, happily, ever inflames a Briton's heart. No such desperate actions are recorded during this war, as those in which our privateers were engaged. The best privateers-men are said to be, not the regular seamen, to whom an action comes as part of the day's work, but those amphibious creatures found all round our coast, and especially about the Channel, who pretend to be engaged in the most innocent and harmless pursuits, and may be found following the plough or driving the quill, or with an apron in a barber's shop, flouring a wig, or even behind a grocer's counter, weighing out pounds of sugar. Yet this is but a show and pretence, and their real trade takes them to and fro across the Channel, to the great detriment of His Majesty's revenue. Privateering, to such as these, is a kind of smuggling, but a finer kind, which one follows without the necessity of sometimes fighting the King's officers, and sometimes murdering an informer. Moreover, a fat merchantman is a far richer prize to bring home than a boat-load of kegs. Therefore, when the 'Porcupine' (so they called her) was launched, and fitted, and armed with eighteen nine-pounders and two six-pounders for her quarter-deck, there was no difficulty in finding a crew of picked men as good as any on board a King's ship, though lacking in discipline—a hundred and twenty in all. The crew of the 'Porcupine,' indeed, showed the stuff of which they were made before the ship sailed. It was in September of the year 1757, when the hottest Press ever known in the Thames was undertaken, and not only were the lanes and alleys of Deptford, Wapping, and Ratcliff scoured for skulking watermen and seamen—the river being wholly deserted for fear of the Pressgang—but also the colliers and ships in the Pool were boarded and their men taken, leaving no more than two able seamen for every hundred tons, according to William the Third's Act. The gang boarded the 'Porcupine,' but the men seized their arms and threatened to fight for their liberty, whereat the lieutenant in command withdrew his men and sheered off, judging it prudent not to engage his company of a dozen or twenty with sixscore resolute fellows.

Meantime, Mr. Brinjes' prediction of misfortune as regards Aaron Fletcher came true—one knows not whether he did anything by his own black arts to bring about the calamities which fell upon him at this time. For, first of all, his boat, as fast a sailer as might be found for crossing the Channel, was picked up by a French privateer, who cared nothing for her being engaged in smuggling or in conveying information or spies backwards and forwards from France to England or from England to France. All is fish that comes to the Frenchman's net. Therefore the 'Willing Mind' was taken in tow, and presently sold at auction in Boulogne Harbour; and so Aaron lost not only his boat, but also his crew of three men, who were like rats for wariness, and could speak both French and English.

Thus went the greater part of his business; and he hung his head, going in great heaviness, and in his cups cursing the Apothecary, whose blood he threatened to spill, for causing his boat to be taken. But worse followed. His boatbuilding yard had become slack of work, and most of his hands were discharged. This was caused by his own neglect, and might have been repaired by steady attention to business. Unhappily, one night the yard took fire, and everything was burned except the little cottage within the gates, where Aaron lived alone. And then, indeed, he raged like a lion, swearing that he would kill, maim, and torture that devil of an Apothecary, who thus pursued him. But Mr. Brinjes was no whit terrified.

Despite these things, we were all surprised to hear that Aaron was going on board the 'Porcupine' privateer; and still more astonished when we learned that he was appointed Third Lieutenant, his proper place being before the mast, or, at best, bo'sn's mate, or gunner's mate, for he was quite an illiterate fellow, who had learned nothing of taking an observation, except how to make it noon, and knew nothing save by rule of thumb of navigation. However, he knew the coast of France as well as any Frenchman, which was, I suppose, the reason why he was appointed an officer; and besides, he had acquired (and truly deserved), in Deptford, Greenwich, and Rotherhithe, the reputation of being a brave, reckless dog, who would fight like a bull-dog. For such work as was wanted of him, no doubt he was as good as any man who had passed his examination in Seething Lane.

Then Aaron got himself a coat of blue, like that worn by the King's officers (but without the white facings), edged with gold—very fine. This he put on, with white stockings, white breeches, and a crimson sash, with a hanger—for all the world as if he were Lieutenant of the Royal Navy—and a hat trimmed with gold lace. Thus attired, he strutted up the street, the boys shouting after him, till he came to Mr. Westmoreland's shop, where Bess sat at the door, her work in her hand. 'Well, Bess,' he said, 'nothing was good enough for thee but an officer and a gentleman. I am an officer now, and if any man dares to say I am not a gentleman, I will fight him with any weapon he pleases. Since one officer has gone away, Bess, take on with another. Don't think I bear a grudge. Nay, I love thee still, lass, in spite of thy damned unfriendly ways.'

'You an officer, Aaron?' Women like fine feathers for themselves, but they are never dazzled with fine feathers in others. 'You an officer?' She surveyed him calmly from head to foot. 'White stockings do not make a gentleman. Your clothes are grand, to be sure. Pity you have not a better shirt to match so fine a coat.' Aaron's linen, in truth, had neither lace nor ruffles, and his cravat was but a speckled kerchief. 'Go change thy linen, Aaron, before pretending to be a gentleman. Well,' she continued, perceiving that he was, as she desired him to be, abashed by the

discovery of this deficiency, 'as for thy dress, 'twill serve for a privateer. Go fight the French, Aaron, and bring home plenty of prize-money. But think not thyself a gentleman.'

So she went indoors and left him. I know not whether he bought himself a shirt to match the coat, but I am sure that on board the white stockings and the white breeches were safely stowed away, and a homelier garb assumed.

Aaron's sea-going lasted no great while. The Captain of the 'Porcupine' was a certain Stephen Murdon, who had commanded an armed merchantman in the China trade, in which he had seen fighting with the pirates, Chinese and Malay, which infest the narrow seas. He was a very brisk, courageous fellow, skilful in handling his ship; and she being a fast sailer, he was generally able to choose or to decline an engagement, as suited him best. For instance, he would not engage a French privateer if he could avoid so doing, on the principle that it is foolish for dog to bite dog, and because it is the business of the King's ships to clear the Channel of privateers; but with a merchantman, however strong, he was like a bloodhound for the chase, and a bull-dog for fighting. I do not know how much prize-money he would have made for himself, but his owners were at first very much pleased with their venture, and promised themselves great returns. Unfortunately, a circumstance happened which brought the 'Porcupine's' cruise to an untimely end. There were many complaints from Holland against the English privateers, who mistook Dutch for French colours, and treated them accordingly. Captain Murdon was one of those who were suspicious of Dutch colours. Unfortunately, he one day overhauled a Dutch vessel conveying to Amsterdam no less a personage than the Spanish Ambassador; and, on the pretence that she was sailing under false colours, plundered the ship, taking out of her, as the complaint of the Captain set forth, a purse containing seventeen guineas, twenty deal boxes containing valuable stuffs, and three bales of cambric, the whole valued at two hundred guineas. Nor was this all, for this audacious Captain Murdon helped himself as well to His Excellency's chests and cases containing jewels and treasure.

There was a great outcry about this affair, and Captain Murdon (who was very well known to have done it, but it was pretended there was no evidence) hastened to hand over the 'Porcupine' to her owners, paid off his crew, and recommended his officers to lie snug for a while. I know not who had the booty, but the officers and crew had none. As for himself, he was provided with a ship in the East India trade, so as to get more speedily out of the country. The Government offered twenty pounds reward for the discovery of the ship which had thus insulted a friendly Power; but no one took the offer seriously, and war immediately afterwards breaking out with Spain, no further trouble was taken in the matter. But thus Aaron's chances of prize-money were lost, and he himself returned to Deptford little richer than when he went away. Captain

Murdon offered him, it is true, a berth on board his new ship; but Aaron had no desire to go fighting Chinese pirates, and therefore stayed at home. Then he began to pretend that he was putting up his building-sheds again; but, as you shall see, he had no luck: his fortune had deserted him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOW MR. BRINJES EXERCISED HIS POWERS.

It was on Saturday, the last day of June, in the year of grace 1760 (our Lieutenant having been away at sea two years and a half), and on the stroke of seven, that Mr. Brinjes sallied forth from his shop. He was dressed—being now on his way to the Club at the Sir John Falstaff—in his black velvet coat with lace ruffles; he carried his laced hat under his arm, and had upon his head his vast wig, whose threatening foretop, majestic with depending knots, before and behind the shoulders, proclaimed his calling. In his hand he bore his gold-headed stick (not the famous skull-stick); his stockings, which in the morning were of grey woollen, knitted by the hands of Bess, were now of white silk; and his shoes were adorned with silver buckles. He was no longer Apothecary to the scum of Deptford: he was in appearance a grave and learned Physician. Yet, if one looked more closely, it might be discerned that the wig was ill-dressed; the ruffles at his wrist torn; that one or two of the silver buttons had fallen from his coat-sleeves; that his stockings were splashed a little, and there was a rent in one; and that his shoes were only smeared, not brightened. These, however, were defects which Mr. Brinjes did not heed. It was enough for him to possess and to wear a coat and a wig which became the company which met at the Sir John Falstaff.

He stood awhile looking up and down the street, first casting his eye upwards to note the weather, a thing which no one who has been a sailor neglects, whether he goes upon deck or leaves the house. The sky was clear, the wind southerly, and the now declining sun shone upon the houses, so that, though mean and low, they glowed in splendour, and the Apothecary's silver pestle showed as if it were of pure solid silver, and the Penman's golden quill as if it were indeed of burnished gold, and the Barber's brass vessels across the way, catching the sun by reflection, shone as if they, too, were of gold; while the diamond panes of the upper lattice windows were all on fire, and one's eyes could not brook to gaze upon them; the red tiles of the gables, though they were overgrown with moss, seemed as if they had newly left the potter's hands; and the timber-work of the house fronts was like unto black marble or porphyry. No painting was ever more splendid than those mean houses under the summer evening's sunlight. At

the Barber's door there arose a curious cloud, which produced an effect as of a white mist rising from the ground. It was, however, nothing but one of the 'prentices flouring the Vicar's wig for Sunday. Lower down the street there was leaning against a post the tall form of Aaron Fletcher. He had nothing now, in his appearance, of the gallant privateer, being dressed as becomes a tradesman, in a fur cap, grey stockings, round shoes, and a drugget waistcoat; yet there was in him something that looked like a sailor: however you disguise him, the sailor always betrays himself. His hands were in his waistcoat pockets, and his eyes were fixed upon the Golden Quill, because he hungered still for a sight of the girl who lived beneath that sign. In spite of his strength and his courage, one word from Bess would have made this giant as weak as a reed. But as for her, she would no more so much as speak friendly with him, being angered at his importunity.

Bess sat in the open doorway, partly screened from the glare of the evening, and partly sitting in the open sunshine, because she was not one of those who fear to hurt her complexion. She was working at something which lay in her lap, and sat with her back turned to Aaron, as if she knew that he was there, and would not so much as look at him. Through the door one might see her father at his work, spectacles on nose.

Mr. Brinjes looked at her, still standing before his own door. Then she raised her head, hearing his footstep, and laughed. She always laughed at sight of Mr. Brinjes in the evening, because, in his great wig and velvet coat, on his way to the Club, he was so different from Mr. Brinjes in his scratch or his night-cap, sitting in his parlour or his shop.

'Saucy baggage!' said the Apothecary. 'Stand up, Bess, and let me see how tall thou art.'

She obeyed, and stood up, overtopping Mr. Brinjes by more than the foretop of his wig; she was, in fact, five feet eight inches in height, as I know, because I measured her about this time. It is a great stature for a woman. She was now past her twenty-first year, and therefore full grown, and no longer so slim and slender in figure as when Jack sailed away at Christmas, in the year seventeen hundred and fifty-six. She was now a woman fully formed; her waist not slender, as fine ladies fondly love to have it, but like the ancient statues for amplitude; her shoulders large and square rather than sloping, her neck full and yet long, her skin of the whitest, her hair and eyes of the blackest; as for the eyes, they were large and full, and slow rather than quick of movement, a thing which betokens an amorous or passionate disposition; her face, as one sees in the faces of certain Italian painters, with an ample cheek, full and rosy lips, with a straight nose and low forehead. About her head she had tied a kerchief. For my own part, I have always maintained that Bess was the most beautiful woman I have ever looked upon in Deptford or anywhere else, though one may admit, what Castilla insists, that, however beautiful a girl may

be, she belongs to her own class. Truly, all poor Bess's troubles came to her because she loved a gentleman.

Mr. Brinjes surveyed her critically. Then he sighed and said, 'Thou art, I swear, Bess, fit for the gods themselves! Well, child?' —and then he sighed again.

'Is there news?' she asked.

'I hear of none,' he replied, gravely. 'Bess, the time goes on. Is it well to waste thy youth on a man who comes not back? There are other men——'

'Talk not to me,' she cried, impatiently, 'talk not to me of other men. There is no other man in the world for me but Jack. As for other men—I scorn 'em.'

She drew from her bosom half a sixpence, tied to a piece of black ribbon. This she kissed, and put back again.

'It is long since we had news of him,' Mr. Brinjes went on, doubtfully, and dropping his voice, because Mr. Westmoreland sat within, poring over his books.

'He loves me,' she replied in a whisper. And the thought caused her cheek to glow, and her eyes became humid. 'He told me he should always love me. Why, a man cannot be continually writing letters. He wrote to me once—which is enough—to tell me again that he loves me. And I think of him all day long.'

'Well said, girl! That is only what is due to so gallant a lover.'

'I belong to him—I am all his. Why else should I desire to live? Why do I go to church, if not to pray for him?'

'Good girl! Good girl! Would that all women had such constant hearts! I have known many women, whether at home or at Kingston, or on the Guinea Coast. Some I have known jealous; some full of tricks and tempers: but never a one among them all to be constant. Good girl, Bess!'

'Sometimes I think—oh!—suppose he should never come back at all! or suppose I should learn that another woman had entrapped him with her horrid arts?'

Mr. Brinjes smiled, as one who knows the world.

'Sailors do sometimes fall into traps,' he said. 'They are everywhere laid for sailors. Perhaps in another port—nay, in half a dozen ports, he may have found—nay, child, be not uneasy. Why'—here he swore as roundly as if he had been an Admiral at least—'a thousand girls shall be forgotten when once he sees thy handsome face again. What though his thoughts may have gone a-roving—though I say not that they have—they will come home, The Lieutenant will be true. Gad! There cannot be a single Jack of all the Jacks afloat who would not joyfully come back to such a sweetheart.'

'Oh, yes!' She made as if she would draw something else from her bosom, but refrained. 'I have his letter, his dear letter. Jack is true. He swore that no one should ever come between him and me.'

'There is another thing, child. He left thee, Bess, a slip of a girl seventeen years old, with little but great black locks and roguish tricks. When he comes back he will find another Bess.'

'Oh!' she cried in alarm. 'But he will expect the same.'

'And such a Bess—such a beautiful Bess—fit for a Prince's love.'

'I want no Prince but Jack,' said Bess, her eyes soft and humid, and her lips parted.

'He will be satisfied. Rosy lips and black eyes, shapely head and apple-cheek, dimpled chin and smiling mouth, and such a throat! I have seen such, Bess, in the girls of the Guinea Coast when they are young; just such a throat as thine—as slender and as round, though shiny black. For my own part, I love the colour.'

'Happy boy! happy girl!' he cried, after sighing heavily; 'I would I were young again to fight this lover for his mistress. Tedious it is to look on at the game which one would still be playing.'

'There is one thing which troubles me,' she said. 'It is the importunity of Aaron, who will never take nay for his answer. He comes every evening—nay, sometimes in the morning—telling me the Lieutenant has forgotten me, and offering to take his place. And he will still be saying things of Jack (who cudgelled him so famously). If I were a man I would beat him till he roared for mercy.' Her eyes now flashed fire, I warrant you, sleepy and calm as they had looked before. 'But I can do nothing; and Luke is too small and weak to fight so great a man. He stands there now—look at him!'

'Patience, my girl; patience! I will tackle this love-sick shepherd.'

More he would have said, but Mr. Westmoreland himself came to the door, his quill behind his ear, with round spectacles on his nose, blinking in the sunshine like an owl or a bat, as if the light was too much for him. He was dressed in a rusty brown coat, worn so long that the sleeves had exactly assumed the shape of his arms; the cuff of the right arm was shiny, where it had rubbed against the table; and the back was shiny, where it had rubbed against his chair. On his head was a nightcap of worsted. Strange it was that so feeble a creature should be father of such a tall, strong, and lovely girl. Yet these contrasts are not unknown.

'A fine evening, Mr. Brinjes,' he quavered, in his squeaky voice; 'a fine evening, truly.'

'Truly, Mr. Westmoreland.'

'Is there news of the Lieutenant?'

'I have none, sir.'

'Pray Heaven he be not killed or cast away. Many brave youths are nowadays killed or cast away at sea. You remember Jack Easterbrook, Bess?' She looked at Mr. Brinjes and smiled. 'I have never had a scholar (to call a scholar) like unto him. Dolts

and blockheads are they all, compared with him. Never such a lad—never such a lad for quickness and for parts.'

Mr. Brinjes nodded and went on his way. Mr. Westmoreland spread his hands out in the sunshine as one who stands before a warm fire, and he pushed back his nightcap as if to warm his skull. But his daughter sat still, the knitting-needles idle in her lap and her eyes fixed as one who hath a vision, and her lips parted, as in a dream of happiness. Poor child! It was her last.

Mr. Brinjes walked slowly down the street until he came to Aaron Fletcher. Then he stopped and surveyed the man from head to foot.

'Aaron,' he said, 'have a care; have a care. Thou hast been warned already. A certain girl, who shall be nameless, is food for thy betters, master boatbuilder. Food for thy betters!'

Aaron muttered something.

'Why, it is but two years and a half agone, if thou wilt remember, good Aaron, that a certain thing happened wherefore I warned thee that trouble would follow. Has it followed? Where is the "Willing Mind"? Captured by the French. Where is the prize-money thou wast to get from the privateer? Her cruise was cut short. Where is thy building-yard? It is burned down. Where is thy business? It is gone. Thus would-be murderers are rightly punished. Wherefore, good Aaron, again I say—Have a care.'

Aaron made no reply, but shuffled his feet.

'And what do we here?' Mr. Brinjes asked sternly. 'Do we wait about the street in hopes of catching a look—a covetous and a wanton look—upon a face that belongs to another man? Aaron Fletcher—Aaron Fletcher, I have warned thee before.'

'With submission, sir,' said the young man, 'the street is free to all. As for my betters, a boatbuilder is as good as a penman, I take it.'

'Go home, boy; go home. Leave Bess alone, or it will be the worst for thee.'

'I take my answer from none but Bess.'

'She hath given thee an answer.'

Here the young man plucked up courage, and fell to railing and cursing at Mr. Brinjes himself—a thing which no one else in the whole town would have dared to do—not only for losing him his boat and building-yard by wicked machinations and magic, but also for standing, he said, between him and the girl he loved, and keeping her mind filled with nonsense about a King's officer, who had gone away and forgotten her; whereas, if it had not been for this meddlesome old Apothecary—the devil fly away with him and all like unto him!—the girl would have been his own long ago, and he would have made her happy.

'Here is fine talk!' said Mr. Brinjes, at length, and after hearing him without the least signs of anger. 'Here is a proper gamecock! Aaron, thou must have a lesson. So! That hollow tooth of thine, my lad: the one at the back, the last but one in the

left-hand lower jaw!' The fellow started and turned pale. 'Go home now, quickly.' Here Mr. Brinjes shook the gold head of his walking-stick threateningly, while his one eye flamed up like a train of powder. 'Go home; on thy way the tooth will begin to shoot and prick as with fiery needles. Go, therefore, to bed immediately. It will next feel as if a red-hot iron were clapped to it and held there, and thy cheek will swell like a hasty pudding. The pain will last all night. In the morning come to me; and perhaps, if I am merciful and thou showest signs of grace and repentance, I may pull out the tooth. Thou canst meditate, all night long, on the incomparable graces of the girl who can never be thy sweetheart.'

The young man received this command with awe-struck eyes and pale cheek. Then he obeyed, going away with hanging head and dangling hands—a gamecock with the spirit knocked out of him.

Strange that a doctor should be able to cause, as well as cure, disease. As Aaron Fletcher drew near to his workshop he felt the first sharp pang and pricking of toothache. When he reached his bed the misery was intolerable. All night long he rolled upon his pallet, groaning. In the morning he repaired to Mr. Brinjes, dumbfounded, his face tied up, seeking for nothing but relief.

'Aha!' said Mr. Brinjes. 'Here is our lad of spirit—here is our lover. Love hath its thorns, Aaron, as well as its roses. Sit down, sit down.—The basin, James—and cold water. It is a grinder, and will take a strong pull. Hold back his head, James—and his mouth wide open. So—with a will, my lad. It is done.—Go no more to the neighbourhood of Bess Westmoreland, my lad. 'Tis a brave tooth, and might have lasted a lifetime. The neighbourhood of Bess Westmoreland is draughty, full of toothaches and rheumatisms. I think I saw another hollow grinder on the other side. Take great care, Aaron. Avoid Church Lane, especially in the evening. Go thy way now, and be thankful that things are no worse.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN COMMAND.

When Mr. Brinjes had disposed of this importunate swain, he went on his way, and presently entered the Blue Parlour, where some of the gentlemen were already assembled, waiting for the arrival of their president or chairman, the Admiral, who was not long in coming, with his escort of negroes.

When he had taken his seat, his pipe filled, his gold-headed stick within reach, he rapped upon the table once.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'good evening, one and all.'

Then he rapped upon the table twice.

Immediately the landlord appeared at the door, bearing in his hand a great steaming bowl of punch, which he placed before the president. One of the negroes filled a brimming glass and gave it to his master. Then he filled for the others and passed the glasses round; and the Admiral, standing up, shouted, 'Gentlemen, His Majesty's health, and confusion to his enemies!'

This done, he sat down and prepared to spend a cheerful evening.

By this time it was eight o'clock, though not yet sunset—though the western sky was red and the sun low in the west. With much whistling of pipes and ringing of bells the day's work at the Yard hard by was brought to a close. Whereupon a sudden stillness fell upon the air, broken only by the hoarse cries and calls from the ships in mid-river now working slowly up stream, with flow of tide and a light breeze from the south or south-east.

'Gentlemen,' said the Admiral, with importance, 'I have this day received despatches from Jack Easterbrook, my ward, which I have brought with me to gladden your hearts, as they have gladdened mine.' He tugged a packet out of his pocket, and laid it on the table before him. 'He writes,' continued the Admiral, 'from his ship, the "Sapphire" frigate, Captain John Strachan; and, to begin with, the letter is dated November, but appears to have been written from time to time as occasion offered. At that time he was with Admiral Sir Edward Hawke, whose health, gentlemen, we will drink.'

They did so. The Admiral proceeded, with the deliberation which belongs to one-armed men, to open the letter, and, after, calling for a candle, to read it.

'"Nov. 22, 1759."—The boy writes, gentlemen, as I said before, from aboard the frigate "Sapphire," Captain Strachan, then forming part of Commodore Duff's squadron, and of Sir Edward Hawke's fleet, blockading the port of Brest. It is his account of the action whereof intelligence reached the Admiralty six months ago. Humph! At the beginning the boy presents his duty and respect, which is as it should be. He is well and without a scratch. But the news is six months old, and of the stalest. Yet it is welcome. Now listen.

'"I wrote to you last when we were driven by stress of weather to raise the blockade of Brest and put in at Torbay."—He did, gentlemen, and you heard his letter read.—"I hope my letter came to hand."—It did.—"By stress of weather to raise the blockade of Brest."—This letter-reading is tedious work.' The Admiral took another drink of punch, and proceeded, folding the letter so as to catch the light, and reading very slowly. '"When the gale abated we put to sea again, but found that the Frenchman had slipped his cables and was off. 'Twas a fisherman of Beer, a little village on the Devonshire coast, who saw the French fleet under full sail, and brought the news. We found out, afterwards, there were twenty sail of the line and five frigates that sailed out

of Brest, being bound, as was conjectured, for Quiberon Bay. But this we could not rightly tell. However, we crowded sail and after them, the wind blowing fresh, the water lumpy and the weather thick, so that we made a poor reckoning, and the fleet was much scattered. However, on the sixth day, being the morning of the 20th, the signal was hoisted of the enemy's fleet, and the Admiral gave his signal to close up for action. Well, there they were in full sight, but apparently with mighty little stomach for the fight; and, instead of shortening sail and accommodating us like gentlemen, they scudded before us. However, towards eight bells, when the men had taken their dinners and their rum, and were in good fighting trim, and ready to meet the Devil himself on his three-decker"—'tis a deuce of a boy, gentlemen—"the 'Warspite' and the 'Devastation' had the good luck to come up first with the French rear, and the action began. Very soon we all drew up, and pounded away. As for the 'Sapphire,' we, with the 'Resolution,' seventy-four, were speedily engaged with the 'Formidable,' eighty, Rear-Admiral Verger; and a very brisk engagement it was, the Frenchman being full of spirit. But he had the sense to strike after three hours of it, and after losing 200 men killed and wounded. There was a very good account made of the other ships, though not without misfortunes on our part. The 'Thésée,' seventy-four, thinking to fight her lower-deck guns, shipped a heavy sea, and foundered, with all her crew. She would have made a splendid prize, indeed, and a magnificent addition to His Majesty's fleet. But it was not to be."—The decrees of Providence, gentlemen,' said the Admiral, 'are not to be questioned or examined. But it passes human understanding to see the sense of sinking the "Thésée," instead of letting her become a prize and an ornament to King George's Navy, and useful for the cause of justice.' Then he continued reading: '"The French ship 'Superbe,' seventy, also capsized"—dear, dear, gentlemen! another loss to us—"and went down, I think, from the same cause. So here were two good ships thrown away, as one may say, by lubberly handling. We had bad luck with two more noble ships: one of them, the 'Héros,' as beautiful a seventy-four as you ever clapped eyes on, struck; but the waves were, unluckily, running too high for a boat to be lowered, and in the night she ran aground. So did the 'Soleil-Royal,' eighty; and next day we had to set fire to them, though it was enough to bring tears to the most hard-hearted for thinking how they would have looked sailing up the Solent, the Union Jack at the stern, above the great white Royal. Our misfortunes did not end here; for H.M.S. 'Resolution' unfortunately went ashore too, and now lays a total wreck, and all her crew drowned. The 'Essex,' also, went ashore and is lost, but her crew saved. As for us, it was stand by, load and fire, for nearly three hours, but only two officers killed and three wounded, with twenty men killed and thirty wounded. I think the Mounseers, who were safe within the bar of the river, will stay there so long

as we are in sight. For though they pounded us, we've mauled them, as I hope you will allow. 'Tis thought that we may be despatched in search of Thurot's squadron. So no more at present from your obedient and humble JOHN EASTERBROOK." Well, gentlemen, there is my letter, and what do you think of it?'

'Always without a scratch,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'Well, the lad is as lucky as he is brave. Every bullet has its billet. Pray that the bullet is not yet cast which will find its billet in Jack. Admiral, let us drink the health of this gallant lad.'

And then they fell to talking of Jack's future, and how they should all live to see him an Admiral and a Knight, and in command of a fleet, and achieving some splendid victory over the French. But Mr. Brinjes checked them, because he said that to anticipate great fortune is, as the negroes of the Gold Coast know full well, to draw down great disaster. But still they talked of the brave boy who had grown up among them, and was now doing his duty like a man.

Now, in the midst of this discourse, the landlord ran into the room, crying, 'Admiral and gentlemen, here comes a French prize up the river!' And all, leaving their pipes and punch, hurried forth into the garden.

There is no more gallant sight than the arrival of a prize, especially when, as then happened, she comes up the river at the sunset of a glorious summer day, when the yellow light falls upon her sails, and colours every rope of her rigging, and when, as then happened, she bears about her all the marks of a long and terrible battle—her bulwarks broken away, her mainmast gone, great rents and holes in her side, her sails shattered, and even the beautiful carved group which once served for a figure-head, such as the French love, broken and mutilated.

'A French prize, truly, gentlemen,' said the Admiral. 'There is a French cut about her lines—and look! there is the white flag with the Union Jack above.'

She came up Greenwich Reach, her heavy sails barely drawing, as if she was ashamed of being seen a prisoner in an English port. At her stern floated the flag of the French Navy, the great white flag with the Royal arms in gold. But above this flag floated the British Ensign. And every gentleman in the company tossed his hat and shouted at the sight.

'Landlord,' said the Admiral, 'fetch me your glass, and quick. The evening falls apace.'

The landlord brought a sea telescope.

'She's a fifty-eight gun-ship, gentlemen. There has been warm work. Mainmast gone, mizen topmast carried away, bows smashed, rigging cut to pieces. Seems hardly worth the trouble of bringing up the Channel. But'—here he wiped the glass with his coat-sleeve, and applied it more curiously, 'who is that upon the quarter-deck? Gentlemen—gentlemen all—it is . . . it is . . . it is none other than Jack Easterbrook himself in command!

Damn that boy for luck! Cudjo, ye lubber, bring me my stick! Gentlemen, we will all hasten to the Yard, and board the ship as soon as she drops her bower. Landlord, more punch! Jack's home again, and in command of a prize! And, landlord, if I find my negroes sober when I come back, gad! I'll break every bone in your body!'

In this triumphant way did Jack come home, in charge of a splendid frigate, the 'Calypso,' taken after as obstinate an action as one may desire or expect, by the 'Sapphire,' in the Chops of the Channel, and sent to Deptford under command of Lieutenant John Easterbrook, to be repaired and added to His Majesty's Navy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOW BESS LISTENED FOR HIS STEP.

It was not until nearly midnight that Mr. Brinjes came home—a late hour even in London, where they turn night into day; but at Deptford there is not so much as a single drinking-house open at that hour, and everyone, rogues and honest men, the virtuous and the abandoned, are all alike in bed and asleep. The moon was full and the street was as light as day. Over the Penman's shop the lattice-window was partly open.

'It is Bess's room,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'She is asleep, and dreaming of her Lieutenant. And he hath forgotten her. 'Tis pity she had not listened to Aaron's voice. He hath surely forgotten her, seeing that he hath well-nigh forgotten me, and asked no questions at all concerning her. Sleep on, Bess; sleep on, my girl. To-morrow thou wilt not sleep at all: and the next day, or the next, will come the whirlwind! Perhaps the sight of thy charms . . . but I know not. Our honest lad is changed.'

He opened the door of his shop, and went into his own den.

At nine of the clock, or thereabouts, when the early chins had been shaved, and the wigs dressed and sent round to the gentlemen, Mr. Peter Skipworth, the Barber, found time to run across the street to his gossip and neighbour the Penman.

'Great news, Mr. Westmoreland!' he cried. 'Great news for Deptford!'

'Why?' asked the Penman. 'Is another Czar coming here?'

'No—no. But the Lieutenant has come home.'

'Lieutenant Easterbrook?'

'What other? He came up the river last night, in command—think of that! the Lieutenant in command!—of a prize sent here to be repaired and added to His Majesty's Navy. The Admiral ordered his negroes to get drunk, so great was the worthy gentleman's joy; and now they lie like hogs at the Sir John Falstaff.

and cannot yet be awakened, though 'tis nigh twelve hours since they rolled over.'

'Lieutenant Easterbrook, who once was Jack, whom I taught the elements of navigation—he hath returned?' Mr. Westmoreland was slow of catching news, being always wrapped in the study of mathematics.

Bess stopped her work at the first mention of his name, and listened—her heart beating, and her cheek now flushed, now pale. Oh! he was come home again!

'We have not yet seen him,' the Barber continued; 'though I expect he will come to have his hair dressed and his chin shaven. None other hand but mine shall touch him, I promise you. The landlord of the Sir John Falstaff says that a more gallant gentleman he hath never set eyes upon.'

'Ha!' said Mr. Westmoreland. 'That the Lieutenant is safe and sound, I rejoice. But the brave boy who was so good at his figures, he, neighbour, will no more return to us. He is gone, and will never come back again. Where is he now—that boy? Where are now all the boys who have since grown into men? What has become of them? I doubt he will forget his humble friends and well-wishers.' The Barber ran back to his own shop. 'Dost remember the Lieutenant, Bess?'

But Bess made no reply. He was come back—her splendid lover! How could she answer her father's prattle, or think about anything but Jack and love? Already she felt his arms about her neck, and his kisses on her cheek; and she was suffused with blushes and the glow of happiness.

She would not, she thought, betray her eagerness and her joy Therefore she went about her household work as usual, yet with a beating of her heart and expectancy, as if he might send the Apothecary's assistant for her at any moment. When all was done, and the whole house as neat and clean as my lady's tea-table, Bess went upstairs to her bedroom, and began to prepare for her sweetheart, her heart filled with gladness and pride that he was come home again in a manner so glorious; and with terror, also, lest she might have lost some of her charms. She looked in her glass. Nay, she was more beautiful, she saw plainly, than when he left her nigh upon three years ago: her eyes were brighter, her figure fuller, her lips ruddier, her skin whiter, her cheeks rosier. If Jack loved her for her beauty he must needs, she knew, and smiled at the pleasing thought, love her now much more. Then she drew his letter from her bosom, where it lay wrapped in its silken bag, and read it all over again, knowing the words by heart. 'There is not,' it said, 'in all the world a more beautiful girl than my Bess, nor a fonder lover than her Jack.'

She put on her finest and best—with the coral beads which Jack had given her to hang round her neck, and the ribbons—also his gift—would he remember them as well? She dressed her hair in the way that he used to love, and then, when all was ready, she

stole down the stairs, and so out by the back way to the Apothecary's parlour, that bower of love, though it was not also a bower of roses and fragrant flowers.

The room was empty. In the shop sat Mr. Brinjes, in his place, the great book before him; the assistant, James Hadlow, stood at the counter, rolling and mixing, and the shop was filled with women who had brought sick children.

'Mr. Brinjes,' cried Bess.

'Ay. . . . Ay, my girl,' he replied.

'He has come home,' she cried, heedless now of the women and their gossip.

'Very like—very like—so they tell me.'

'So they tell me!' she echoed, laughing. 'As if it mattered nothing. Yet he will but shake hands with the Admiral and come here. "So they tell me," he says.'

'I come, Bess,' he replied, looking at her sadly; 'I come in a few minutes. Now, you women who have had your answer and your physic, take your brats away. This morning I am benevolently disposed, and will cure them all. Go away, therefore, and prate no more.—I come in a few minutes, Bess.'

So she waited, glowing with the anticipation of her lover's welcome, her eyes soft and humid, her bosom heaving; and what with the tumult of her soul and her finery—for, as I have said, she had put on her coral and her ribbons—and all his gifts, looking truly a most beautiful creature. At half-past twelve Mr. Brinjes closed his great book, descended from his stool, and came into the parlour.

'I have seen him, Bess,' he said. 'I saw him last night.'

'Oh! you have seen him, and you did not wake me up to tell me. You have spoken to him. What did he say? How doth he look? What did he ask about me? What messages did he send? And is he wounded? Is he safe and well? Oh! but he will be here directly. Even now his step may be in the street—Listen!—no—not yet—he will come to tell me! Why—you tell me nothing. Once you said that my Jack might forget me. I will not tell him that, Mr. Brinjes, because he is masterful, and I would not anger him against you. Why, you tell me nothing. I have put on all the things he gave me. Am I looking well? Do you think he will find me changed?'

'For your questions, Bess, he looks strong and well, though somewhat changed in manner, and colder than of old; and to some of us he might have shown more civility. For me, I complain not, though he gave me but a cold hand; but Mr. Shelvocke may justly complain, and Mr. Underhill—though one, truly, was but a supercargo, and the other but the purser.'

'Jack can never forget his old friends,' said Bess, 'any more than he can forget his old love. But he is now in command of a prize.'

'Bess, my girl,' said Mr. Brinjes, very earnestly, 'don't build

hopes on the promise of a sailor. My dear, I know the breed, all my life, being now past fourscore and ten. I have lived among sailors. I tell thee, child, I know them. With them, it is out of sight out of mind. When a man goes fighting, hath he room in his mind for a woman? And the more a woman loves a sailor, the less he loves her. If he hath forgotten thee, my dear, let him go without a tear or a sigh, for there are plenty other men in Deptford who would gladly possess thy charms.'

'Stop!' she cried, flying out suddenly. 'Why, you are talking like a mad thing! You don't know my Jack. How should you know him? How should you know any men except the pirates, your old friends, and the rough tarpaulins who come here to be healed? Who are you, a little common apothecary, to talk of men like the Lieutenant? How are you to know the ways of the King's officers? Why, if you have been to sea in a King's ship, 'twas only to mess with the Midshipmen and the Purser's Mate.'

'Well, Bess, well.' he replied, not angry, but bearing the attack with meekness. 'That shall be as you please. If your man is constant he will seek thee here, in the old place. If he is not, we will, I say, be reasonable, and expect no better than others receive.'

'Oh! If you were a young man—a man like Aaron,' cried Bess, 'Jack should beat you to a jelly for this.'

'Ay, ay—very like, very like. You shall beat me if you like, my girl. Bess,' said Mr. Brinjes, looking her earnestly in the face, 'if it would give you any pleasure, and bring your lover back, you should beat me yourself till you could lay on no longer.'

'My lover will come back to me,' she replied. 'He will be here this morning or this afternoon. Of course, he will come as soon as he can.'

'Perhaps. But he is changed. He sat among the gentlemen of the Club last night, but it was to please the Admiral, not himself. He wanted none of our company. I sat beside him, but he asked me no question at all. What!—should I not know the lover's eyes? Bess, he hath forgotten thee.'

'You are a liar!' she replied, springing to her feet, as if she would take him at his word and lay on till she could lay on no longer. 'You say this because you are old and ill-tempered, and envious of younger people's happiness. Who are you that Jack should remember you? Who but a common sailors' apothecary—and he a Lieutenant in command?'

'Ay, ay, my girl; pay it out. I am a sailors' apothecary. I am old and envious. Pay it out. I value not thy words—no, not even a rope's yarn—because, Bess, I love thee, my dear, and I would not see thee unhappy about any man. What is a man worth beside a lovely woman? If I were a woman, would I throw my love away upon a single man? Two years and more hast thou wasted upon this fine lover, who, when he comes back, hath never a word to ask—not even, "How fares my Bess?"'

'Why,' said Bess, 'how could he ask concerning me, before

those gentlemen? Say no more, Mr. Brinjes, for I would not be angered and show a red cheek when he comes. You know that I am easily put out. Besides, you are only laughing at me, and I am a fool to fly out. Jack will come to me as soon as he can leave his ship. Very likely he will not get away until the evening.'

So she sat down on the window-seat, and recovered her spirits, feeling no doubt at all, nor any misgivings, and began talking merrily of what she would say when he came, and what he would say to her, and how they would brew him a glass of punch such as he loved, before they suffered him to say a word of his own adventures, and how she would fill for him a pipe of tobacco, thinking—poor wretch!—that her lover was unchanged not only in his affections, but also in his manners.

Then Mr. Brinjes made his dinner. That is to say, he fried his beefsteak and onions, and presently ate them up, with a tankard of black beer. After dinner he took a glass of punch, filled and smoked a pipe of tobacco, and then, rolling himself in his pillows, fell fast asleep, as was his wont.

Bess meantime, her wrath subdued, sat in the window-seat, waiting. But the step she looked for came not.

So passed the afternoon.

Towards three o'clock, Mr. Westmoreland, who had been so much occupied with his work that he forgot his dinner, began to feel certain pangs in the internal regions, which he at first attributed to colic, and blamed himself for greediness at meals; but as the pain increased and became intolerable, he pushed away his papers, and sat up, suddenly remembering that he had not had any dinner at all, and that these were pangs of hunger. Three o'clock and no dinner! Where in the world was Bess?

He was accustomed, however, to small consideration from women, and proceeded to rummage in the cupboard, where he found some cold provisions, off which he made a very good dinner. Then, as the day was fine and the sun shining, he stood in the doorway enjoying the warmth.

As he stood there, he saw, marching up the street, no other than the Lieutenant himself, whom he recognised, though he was greatly changed, having now not only filled out in figure, and become a man, who when last seen was a stripling, but having acquired the dignity of the quarter-deck, and the assurance which comes of exercising authority.

However changed, Jack did not forget his old friend.

'What!' he said, 'Mr. Westmoreland! Thou art well, I hope, my friend?'

'I am better than I deserve to be, sir, and glad to see your Honour safe home again.'

'Why, Mr. Westmoreland, the bullet that has my heart for its billet hath not yet found me, though it may be already cast for aught I know. Thou art still busied with logarithms?'

'By the blessing of Heaven, sir,' said Mr. Westmoreland, 'I

have had much to do, both in the advancement of fine penmanship and the calculation of the logarithmic tables.'

Jack nodded and passed on; but he remembered something, and laughed. Then he hesitated, and looked back into the Penman's room.

'You had a daughter, Mr. Westmoreland—Bess, her name was, and a comely girl. I hope she is well. But I see her not in the shop. No doubt she is married long ago, and the mother of thumping twins.'

He laughed, and nodded, and went on his way.

'My daughter, your Honour,' Mr. Westmoreland began, but the Lieutenant was already out of hearing.

'Now,' said the Penman, 'saw one ever a better heart? He not only remembers me, which is natural, seeing that I was his instructor, but he remembers my girl as well. Where is Bess? She will laugh when I tell her. Mother of twins! Ho, ho! "Thumping twins!" he said; Bess will laugh.'

About four in the afternoon Mr. Brinjes woke up, and slowly recovered consciousness, until he felt strong enough to take his afternoon punch; after which he sat up, and became brisk again, looking about the room, and remembering all that had been said.

'Bess,' he cried, 'hath your lover come?'

She shook her head.

'Courage, my girl, courage. Perhaps when he sees thy comely face again he will remember. What! To be loved by such a girl would fire an Esquimaux or a Laplander. Take courage, therefore. There is no more beautiful woman in Deptford, Bess. Take courage.'

'I am waiting for my sweetheart,' she replied, coldly. 'Why should I take courage? He hath been delayed by his affairs. He will come presently.'

'Bess,' Mr. Brinjes whispered, 'there is a way to bring him back.'

'To bring him back? This old man will drive me mad!'

'There is a way, Bess. The old negro woman gave thee a charm to keep him safe from shot and steel. She will give thee one, if I compel her, to bring him to thy knees. Nay, she will not at thy bidding. And for why? Because she wants Miss Castilla to marry the Lieutenant. Yet, if I compel her, she will make thee such a charm. Then he must needs come straight to thee, his heart mad with love, though a hundred fine ladies tried to drag him back.'

'I know not what you mean.'

Mr. Brinjes took up his famous magic stick, the stick with the skull upon it. 'It is by virtue of this stick, which gives its possessor, she believes, greater Obeah wisdom than she hath herself attained unto. Wherefore, if I order her to do a thing she cannot choose but obey, else I might put Obi upon her. She hath given me the secrets of all her drugs, by means of which, if I live long enough, I may find out the greatest secret of all, and be like

unto the immortal angels. She shall obey me in this as well, Bess. Say but the word, and she shall bring him back, though Castilla die for love of the handsome Lieutenant.'

'No, no,' said Bess. 'He has not forgotten me.'

'Child, I *know* that he has. Why, when he went away, if he thought of you his eyes softened. He could not look upon me without remembering his days spent in this room. Yet his eyes softened not. Believe me, he will come here no more. It is strange. . . . I know not what will happen. . . . Sure I am that I shall sail once more upon the Southern Seas, with Jack upon the quarter-deck. A dozen times or more have I inquired of Philadelphy, and still she sees a ship with Jack—and me—and you, Bess—you. Why, I am ninety years of age, and more, girl. Shall I get that charm for thee? If I could get it no other way I would even bribe her with this stick, when all my Obi leaves me, and I shall cause and cure diseases no better than the quacks of Horn Fair and of Bartholomew.'

But Bess shook her head.

'I will have no charm,' she said. 'If Jack will forget me, let him forget me. But he has got my name tattooed upon his arm, and he has got my lock tied round his wrist. If these will not charm him back, nothing else shall.'

So she fell into silence. But at seven in the evening, when Mr. Brinjes put on his wig and coat for the Club, she arose and went home.

'Why,' said her father, 'where hast been all day, girl? There was no dinner. Well; it matters not'—because her face warned him not to rebuke her—'it matters not, and, indeed, I found enough cold bits in the cupboard. But, Bess, thou hast missed a sight.'

'What sight?'

'The sight of a gallant gentleman. I have seen the Lieutenant. He passed by this way to the Admiral's. 'Tis a brave officer now, no taller, perhaps, than when he left us last; but then he was a stripling, and now he is well filled out and set up as brave and comely as one would wish to set eyes upon.'

'And he came to the shop to see me, then?'

'You, Bess? Why should he wish to see you? No—no. . . . A gentleman like that cannot be expected to remember a mere girl. But he had not forgotten me, for when I saw him and took off my cap to him, he stopped and kindly asked me how I fared. His Honour is not one who forgets his humble friends.'

'Did he ask after me?'

'He did, I warrant. He said, "You had a daughter, Mr. Westmoreland." So he looked into the room as if he would give you, too, a greeting; but no one was there. So he said, "But she is married long ago, I dare swear, and hath thumping twins by this time." "Thumping twins," he said, Bess. His Honour was always a merry lad. He remembered me directly; and he hath not even forgotten thee, Bess. Do not think it.'

He had not, indeed. But his remembrance was worse than his forgetfulness. Better to have been forgotten than to be thus remembered.

Then her father left her, to take his pipe and have his evening talk with his cronies; and Bess was left alone in the house. Just so, nearly three years before, she had been left sitting by the fire, when her lover came to her and embraced her, with words which he had now forgotten but she remembered still! Oh, if he should now, as then, lift the latch, and find her there alone, and she could fall upon his breast and tell him all the things in her heart!

She listened for his footstep. Other steps passed by the house, but not the step she looked for; and then her father came home, cheerful and full of talk about the gallant deeds of the Lieutenant, and she must needs give him his supper and listen and make reply.

The Apothecary was right when he said, 'Sleep on, Bess, sleep on. Thou wilt sleep but little to-morrow night.'

CHAPTER XXIX.

'HE HATH SUFFERED A SEA CHANGE.'

Our Lieutenant was engaged all the morning with the Port Admiral and with the Navy Office, but in the after part of the day the Admiral made a great feast for him, as he had done on his last return, to which I was bidden with the rest. But the change which I perceived in him greatly surprised me, and, indeed, all of us. For the young sea-cub, rude in speech and careless of behaviour, was quite gone. Behold in his place a gentleman of polite manners, and as careful of his speech as if he had been all his life in St. James's Street. This was indeed astonishing.

There are, it is certain, too many Captains in the King's ships who have never known better company than they find in a Portsmouth tavern, so that the ridicule which has been lavished upon naval Captains is not undeserved; there are also ships which are no better, as a school of manners for the young officers, than Portsea Hard, so that the Lieutenants and Midshipmen in such vessels hear nothing but rough language with profane swearing, and, even at the Captain's table, which is copied in the ward-room and the gun-room, find the manners of a Newcastle collier. There are also Captains who should never have left the polite part of town, because they pine continually for the pleasures of the theatre and Ranelagh, the clubs of St. James's Street, Covent Garden suppers and gambling-houses; who reek of bergamot, and appear daily on the quarter-deck dressed as if for the Park, and in their hair not a curl out of place, or a single touch of pomatum and powder abated. These men are not those who crowd all sail in pursuit of the enemy, and hasten to lay yard-arm to yard-arm. The sailors call them

Jacky Fal-las, and respect nothing in them but their authority over the cat-o'-nine-tails. Other Captains again there are (under one of them it was Jack's good fortune to serve) who possess such manners, and in their cabins exhibit and expect such conversation and behaviour, as one finds in the most polite assembly, yet are no whit behind the most old-fashioned sea-dog in courage. What could we expect of Jack when he came home to us, after four years spent in wandering among savages, and in a French prison among common sailors, but that he should be rude and rough? What else could we expect, after sailing under a commanding officer of good birth and breeding, than that he should return with polished manners and softened language?

This fact explained part of the change which had taken place in him. But it did not explain all, for Jack, who had formerly avoided the society of ladies, now astonished us by his demeanour towards Madam and Castilla, especially the latter, whose conversation he courted, addressing himself to her continually, so that she was fain to blush under his manifest and undisguised admiration.

This would not have been wonderful in any other man, because eyes of heavenly blue, light brown curls, delicate features, a lovely shape, and the sweetest complexion in the world, might well call forth admiration. But Castilla could boast the same charms, though not so ripe, three years before, when they moved him not a whit. Rather, he regarded them with the contempt of one who has only eyes for the darker charms. Alas! the same look was gathering in his eyes—the look of tenderness and of a hungry yearning—while he gazed upon Castilla which had once been kindled by the black eyes of our poor Bess.

'Now,' cried the Admiral, when Madam retired with Castilla, 'fore Gad! we'll make a night of it. Clean glasses, ye black devils, and brisk about!—Jack, I hope the liquor is to your liking. I love the Mediterranean, for my own part, because the wine is cheap, and strong, and plenty.—Drink about, gentlemen, and when you are tired of the port we will have in the punch. Gentlemen, let us drink the health of the Lieutenant!'

So the bottle began to fly, and the company presently grew merry, and all began to talk together, every man speaking of the glorious actions in which he had taken part; and, as is natural when the heart is uplifted with generous wine, every man thinking that the victory was won by his own valour. Thus, the Admiral related how he had planted the British flag on the island of Tobago; and before he had finished the narrative Mr. Shelvocke interrupted in order to tell the company that it was he alone who had, with his own hand, sacked and burned the town of Payta, and it was he who boarded the Spanish ships on their escape from Juan Fernandez; next, the good old Admiral struck in again to explain who it was that had made Sir Cloudesley Shovel's victories possible. Captain Mayne, at the same moment, remembered that

the powerful assistance he had lent to Admiral Vernon at Portobello had never been properly set forth by historians; and so on. But our hero, who had seen already more engagements than any man present, though he was not yet twenty-four, spoke little, and I observed, which was indeed remarkable in a naval officer, and would be, in this drinking age, remarkable in any man, that he did not drink deep. Presently, when the others were flushed in the cheeks, and some of them thick of speech—the first signs of drunkenness—Jack rose, saying:

'By your leave, Admiral, I will join the ladies.'

'What?' said the Admiral. 'Desert the company? Exchange the bottle for a parcel of women? For shame, Jack, for shame! The punch is coming, dear lad: sit down—sit down.'

But Jack persisted, and I rose too.

'Go, then!' the Admiral roared, with a great oath. 'Go, then, for a brace of gulpins!'

The ladies, who expected nothing but an evening to themselves, as is generally their lot when the men are drinking together, were greatly astonished at our appearance.

'Indeed, Jack,' said Castilla, 'Luke, we know, does not disdain a dish of tea with us. But you—oh! I fear you will find our beverage as insipid as our conversation.'

Formerly, Jack would have replied to this sally that, d'ye see, Luke was a grass comber and a land swab, but that for himself, there was no tea aboard ship, and a glass of punch or a bowl of flip was worth all the tea ever brought from China—or words to that effect. Now, however, he laughed, and said, 'Nay, Castilla, was I ever so rude as to find your conversation insipid? As for your tea, it will, certainly, since you make it, be more delicious than all the Admiral's port.'

At this she blushed again, and presently made the tea and gave him a cup with her own hands, hoping it was sweetened to his liking; and he drank it as if he was accustomed to taking it every day, though I know not when he had taken tea last. He would not, however, drink a second cup, which shows that he did not greatly admire its taste. Now, at the Rainbow, in Fleet Street, I have seen gentlemen who will take their six or seven cups of tea one after the other at a sitting. And the same thing may be seen with ladies when the hissing urn has been brought in and the tea goes round.

Then Castilla asked him a hundred questions about his cruise and his battles, which Jack answered modestly and briefly, while still in his eyes I marked that look of admiration—I knew it well—growing deeper and more hungry; and Castilla, observing it too, continually blushed and stammered, and yet went on prattling, as if his looks fascinated her, as they say that in some countries a snake will so charm a bird that it will sit, still singing, until he darts upon it and swallows it up.

After this he asked her to sing. Her voice was gentle and

sweet, but of small power, and in the old days it had no charms for him, compared with the strong full voice which was at his service in the Apothecary's parlour. But she complied, and sang all the songs she knew in succession.

Jack listened, enthralled. 'Tis well,' he said, with a deep sigh, 'that we have no Castilla on board.'

'Why, Jack?'

'Because life would be so sweet that the men would not fight, for fear of being killed.'

'Thank you, Jack,' she said. 'I never expected so fine a compliment on my poor singing.'

'There never were any Sirens on board ship,' I said, clumsily. 'They are always on land, and sing to lure poor sailors to destruction.'

'Fie for shame, Luke!' cried Castilla. 'That was not prettily said. Am I trying to lure Jack to his destruction, pray?'

We all laughed: and yet, when one comes to think of that evening, I perceive that this innocent creature was actually and unconsciously playing the part of the ancient Siren, because she certainly lured the Lieutenant to the fate that awaited him.

Then Jack offered to sing, somewhat to my dismay, because I remembered certain songs which he had formerly bawled at the Gun Tavern and in the Apothecary's parlour. However, he now sang, his voice being modulated and greatly softened, an old sea-song with a burden of 'As we ride on the tide when the stormy winds do blow' very movingly, so that the tears stood in Castilla's eyes.

We heard, in the next room, the voices of the Admiral and his guests growing louder and faster, and conjectured that the evening would be a short one. This speedily proved true, and the negroes wheeled every man home to his own house, except the Admiral, whom they carried upstairs. As for us, Madam went to sleep in a chair, and we sat down to a game of Ombre, Jack showing himself as pleased with the simple game we played as he had been with the tea and the singing. At the same time his eyes wandered from his cards to Castilla's face, and he played his cards badly, losing every game.

'I cannot remember, Jack,' said Castilla, when we finished, 'that you were fond of cards when last you were at home, unless it were All-fours.'

'He also played,' I said, 'Cribbage, Put, Laugh-and-lie-down, and Snip-snap-snorum'—all of these being games over which, when played with Bess, he had shown great interest.

'Nay,' he replied, earnestly, 'I entreat you, Castilla, to forget wholly what manner of man that was who came home to you in rags. Think that he had been for two years among the Midshipmen, and then for three years among the savages and the Spaniards, and then was thrown into a French prison to mess with common sailors. If you do not forget that rude savage, forgive him, and

understand that he has gone, and will no more be seen. As for the things he did, I look upon them with wonder. Why, if I remember aright, Luke, that sea-swab did not disdain to fight a smuggler fellow at Horn Fair before all his friends.'

'He did not, Jack,' I said. 'But we loved the sea-swab.'

'We should have loved him better, Luke,' said Castilla, gently, 'if he had given more of his company to ourselves and less to the Apothecary. I know how his afternoons were spent, sir.' She nodded and laughed, and he changed colour and started; but, of course, Castilla knew nothing about Bess.

'He is gone,' Jack repeated, 'and I hope that a better man has taken his place. As for your society, Castilla, he must be an insensate wretch indeed who would not find himself happy when you are present.'

'Thank you, Jack;' she made him a curtsey and smiled, yet blushed a little. 'I perceive that another man indeed has taken his place. Poor honest Jack! He spoke his mind, and loved not girls. Yet we loved him—perhaps.' She looked up at him, but dropped her eyes beneath his ardent gaze. 'Perhaps, before long ——'

'Perhaps, Castilla,' said Jack, earnestly, 'you may be able to love the new man better than the old.'

'It is late,' she said, blushing again. 'Good night, Jack.' She gave him her hand, which he held for a moment, looking down upon the pretty slender creature with eyes full of love. And then she left us, and went to bed.

I declare solemnly that I had loved Castilla ever since I could talk; yet in one evening this sailor made fiercer and more determined love to her than I in all those years. Indeed, as she hath since confessed to me, she knew not, and did not even so much as suspect, that I loved her.

'Come into the open, dear lad,' said Jack, presently, after a profound sigh. 'Let us go into the garden, and talk.'

In the garden, what with the twilight of the season and the full moon, it was as bright as day, though eleven o'clock was striking by St. Nicholas' Church clock. We walked upon the trim bowling-green, and talked.

'There is her bedroom,' said Jack, looking at the light in Castilla's chamber. 'See, she has put out the candle. She is lying down to sleep. What—oh, lad!—what can a creature like that, so delicate and so fragile, think of such rough, coarse animals as ourselves? Do you think that she can ever forget or forgive the rude things I have said to her? Do you think she remembers them, and would pay them back?'

'Jack, Castilla has nothing to remember or to forgive. Do you think she harbours resentment for the little rubs of her childhood?'

'She is all goodness, Luke; of that I am convinced. She is as good as she is truly beautiful; of that I need not to be told. As for her beauty, there is nothing in the world more lovely than her

English blue eyes and fair hair. It is by special Providence, I suppose, and to reward us for hating the Pope and the French, that they are made as good as they are beautiful.'

'Did you always prefer fair hair to dark, Jack?' I asked, in wonder that a man should have so changed and should have forgotten so much.

'As for what I used to say and think, dear lad, let that never be mentioned between us. Why, it shames me to think of what an unmannerly cur I must have seemed to all, in those days. Talk not of them, Luke, my lad.'

Poor Bess! She was included among the things belonging to those days. I dared not question him further.

'It is our unhappiness,' he went on, 'that, though we would willingly remain on shore, honour and our own interest call us to go to sea again. Therefore I know not how far a man who is at present only a Lieutenant might hope to win so fair a prize as Castilla. To be sure, she is a sailor's daughter, and knows what she would expect as a sailor's wife. Yet to leave her alone, and without protection! She would have you, to be sure, for her protector, while I am gone.'

Heavens! It was not yet three years since he had solemnly committed another woman to my care. Had he quite forgotten that?

'In a word, Jack,' I said, with bitterness in my heart, 'you have seen Castilla, since your return, but three or four hours, and you are already in love with her.'

'That is true,' he replied. 'I am in love with her. Why,' he laughed, 'you are thinking, I dare swear, of three years ago, when you caught me in a certain summer-house, kissing another girl.'

I acknowledged that I remembered the fact. 'Is she,' I asked, 'quite forgotten? Yet you swore that you loved her, and vowed constancy.'

'Well, my lad, every sailor is allowed to be in love as often as he comes ashore, for that matter. And as for the girl—what was her name?—I believe I did make love to her for a while. And now I hear that she is married, and already the mother of twins.'

'Who told you that?'

'Her father, the Penman.'

'But it is not true, Jack. How could he have told you such a thing? Bess hath never forgotten you.'

'True, or not true, I care not a rope's-end. I am in love with Castilla. Already, you say? Why, a man who did not fall in love with this sweet creature at the very first sight of her would not be half a man. I expect to fight my way through a hundred suitors, to get her hand. The Admiral loves me, and I think he would willingly make me his son-in-law. But I must go to sea once more before I can offer to marry her. Therefore, for her sake, I shall go to London, and turn Courtier. I shall attend the nobleman who once promised me an appointment. He hath now,

doubtless, forgotten both the making and the breaking of that promise. That matters nothing. I shall pay my court to him. I shall practise those arts by which men creep into snug places: it needs but a supple back and an oily tongue. Come to see me in a week or two, and I will wager that I shall be his Lordship's obedient servant, and that he will presently give me a command, if only of a pink; and that Castilla shall be promised to me.'

All these things came to pass, indeed. Yet the result was not, as you shall learn, what he looked for.

CHAPTER XXX.

ALAS! POOR BESS!

Alas! poor Bess!

You have heard how she spent the first day, and with what a heavy heart she went to bed. In the morning she plucked up heart a little. As for what the Lieutenant said to her father, what matter if he did say that she was already married? It was his joke—Jack would ever have his joke. He had been busy all day. The evening he must needs spend with the Admiral, his patron and benefactor. But he would not—he could not fail to see her the second day. So again she dressed in her best, and repaired early to her place in the Apothecary's parlour, where she took her seat and waited. But she laughed no longer, nor did she prattle. Jack came not; he was in London, taking a lodging in Ryder Street, and buying brave things in which to wait upon his Lordship. And the third day she went again—but now with white cheeks and heavy eyes, and she rocked herself to and fro, replying nothing, whatever Mr. Brinjes might say to her.

In the afternoon of that day I went in search of her, being anxious, and dreading mischief.

'I know not,' said Mr. Westmoreland, getting off the stool, 'I know not, indeed, Mr. Luke, what hath happened to the girl, nor where she is, unless she is in Mr. Brinjes' parlour, where most of her days are spent. These three days she hath forgotten to give me any meals, and hath left me alone all day; while in the evening, when I come home, she either sits mum or she goes upstairs. Nothing disturbs the mind in the midst of logarithms more than a doubt whether there will be any dinner to eat or any supper. At this time of the year I commonly look for soft cheese and a cucumber. But now I have to get what I can. I know not what ails her. If I did know I question whether I could find any remedy, seeing that she is so headstrong. Sometimes I doubt whether there is some love trouble on her mind. Yet I know not with whom. It cannot be with Aaron Fletcher, because she has refused the young man several times. Besides, his affairs are said to be well-nigh desperate, his boat being lost, his yard burned down, his boat

building business thrown away; yet, if it is not Aaron, who can it be? Because, sir, though my daughter hath her faults, and those many, being as to temper equalled only by her mother, now in Abraham's bosom, or—or—perhaps elsewhere,' he added, being a truthful man, 'yet she is not one who courts the company of men, nor listens willingly to the voice of love.'

Mr. Brinjes, though it was in the afternoon, was talking with his assistant in his shop.

'You will find her,' he said, 'within. I have left her for five minutes, for it teases me to see her thus despairing. The worst has yet to come, because she is not a girl to sit down peaceably under this contempt. Well, for that matter, every sailor is inconstant, if you please; and the women know it, and expect it. But Bess is no common Poll o' the Point, who looks for nothing else than to be forgotten. Nor did she first seek him out. Yet I knew what would happen, because such love as his was too hot to last—else would it burn him up. There was a Bristol man in Captain Roberts' company was consumed for love of a young Coromantyn girl, wasting away and crying out that he was on fire, yet never happy unless she was at his side. It is a natural witchery which a few women possess, by which they make men love them, and draw the very soul out of the man they love. Bess hath this power: she can make any man love her, and when she loves a man she can bewitch him so that he shall never be happy but at her feet. Why, Jack hath forgotten her. Yet it is most true that, if he but come back to her for a single day, he would fall at her feet again.'

'Nay,' I said, 'he is already in love with another woman.'

'Miss Castilla, the Admiral's daughter. It is a passing fancy, because she is a pretty creature, small and slender. But to compare her with Bess!—to think that a man can love her as he can love Bess! There, you know nothing of love. Go in there, and I will follow. I have known,' he continued, being garrulous, as old men often are, 'I have known such cases as this of Bess—the jealous woman who hath been forgotten—ay, I have known them by the hundred. Sometimes they take it with a sudden rage; sometimes they cry out for a knife, and would kill their faithless lover first and themselves next; sometimes they throw themselves into the water; sometimes they murder the other woman; sometimes they laugh, and lay by for a chance of revenge. One woman I knew who concealed her wrath for twenty years, but revenged herself in the end. Sometimes they make up their minds that it matters little. This case is peculiar; for the patient is not in a rage—as yet; nor has she called for a knife—as yet; nor has she promised to hang herself—as yet; but she sits and waits; and all the time the humours are mounting to the brain; so that we are only at the beginning of the disorder, and my forecast as to this disease is, my lad, that we shall have trouble. What? Is a fine high-spirited girl to be shoved aside into the gutter without a word

said, or any cause pretended? Not so, sir; not so. There will be trouble.'

I passed into the parlour with trepidation. Bess lifted her head. Her face was pale and haggard; wildness was in her eyes.

'Where is he?' she cried. 'You call yourself my friend, yet you come without him. Where is he?'

'I do not know, Bess, where he is, unless that he is somewhere in London.'

'I believe it is you who have kept him from me—yet you call yourself my friend. You have set him against me. Though what you have found to say I know not. I have not so much as looked at another man since he went away, and I have kept his secret for him, so that no one suspects. How dare you put yourself between my sweetheart and me?'

'Indeed, Bess,' I told her, 'I have said nothing against you. I have not put myself between Jack and you. I have said nothing.'

Then she began to rail at me for my silence. Why had I not spoken of her? Why had I not reminded him of his faith and promised constancy? 'And where is he,' she repeated, 'that he does not come to me? Is he afraid of me? Doth he try to hide himself out of my way?'

I told her that he was in lodgings in town, and that his time was taken up with his affairs. And then, because she began to upbraid me again, I thought it was better to tell her the truth, and, therefore, said plainly that the Lieutenant loved her no longer; that he had, indeed, given me to understand, without the possibility of a mistake, that the past was clean forgotten, and gone out of his mind.

I was sorry—truly, I was sorry—for the poor creature. For every word I said was nothing less than a dagger into her heart. A man must have been as hard-hearted as a Romish inquisitor not to have felt sorry for her. She heard me with parted lips and panting breath. Is there, I wonder, a more dreadful task than to be the messenger to tell a fond woman that the man she loves now loathes her?

Seeing that she received my information with no more outward symptom of wrath, I began to point out, to the best of my ability, that Lieutenant Easterbrook, when he fell in love with her, was still less than twenty years of age, who had been for six years separated from his countrywomen, and had forgotten what an Englishwoman should be; that he might have fallen in love with one of his own rank, but for his long wanderings among savages, and his imprisonment with common sailors, which had left him rough and rude in manners; that things were now quite changed, because he was not only an officer of some rank, but was now a gallant gentleman, keeping company of the best, and might, if he desired, marry an heiress; that his long silence ought to have prepared her for the change in his disposition; and that, seeing nobody except Mr. Brinjes and myself knew of what had happened, a wise and prudent girl would show her pride, and take her revenge by showing that

she cared nothing for his neglect. In fact, I said on this occasion all that was proper to be said. Mr. Brinjes sat silent in his chair, but kept his eye upon Bess, as if expecting that something would happen.

Then, long before I had finished all I had to say, Bess suddenly sprang to her feet with a cry, and burst forth into wild and ungoverned wrath. I have seen fishwives fighting at Billingsgate, a ring of men and women round them, and a truly dreadful thing it is to see women stripped for battle and using their fists like men; never before, or since, have I seen a young and beautiful girl thus give way to passion uncontrolled. At first she could find no words to express her wrath; she clutched at her heart; she tore down her hair; she gasped for breath; she swung her arms abroad; she swayed her body backward and forward. I looked to see Mr. Brinjes go seek his lancet, and give her relief by breathing a vein. But he did not. He sat looking on coldly and anxiously, as if he was watching the progress of a fever. Presently she found words.

I will not write down what she said, because, as regards myself and Mr. Brinjes, her reproaches were wholly undeserved, and, indeed, we had been throughout her best friends. Besides, the ravings of a *femina furens*, or woman mad with jealousy and disappointed love, ought not to be set down, any more than those of a man in delirium. When she came to speak of her faithless lover she choked, and presently stopped and was silent. But, poor soul! all the while she looked from one to the other of us as if to find hope in our faces, but saw none. Finally, she shrieked aloud, as if she could no longer bear this agony, and hurled herself headlong upon the floor, and so lay, her head upon her hands, her whole body convulsed.

'Let be, let be,' said Mr. Brinjes; 'after this she will be better. The storm was bound to burst. Better that it should rage in this room than that she should go to a certain house we know of'—he jerked his finger in the direction of the Admiral's. 'Say nothing to her; if you speak you will make her worse. Presently she will come round. What? Nature can go no farther, unless she would wear herself to pieces. And they never go so far as that, whatever their wrath, because the pain of the body becomes intolerable.'

He spoke as if she could not hear or was insensible, which I take to have been the case, for in five minutes or so she sat up, taking no notice of what had been said, and became partly rational, and said calmly, sitting on the floor, that she should go away and kill Jack first, and herself afterwards; and she declared that, if he dared to address any other woman, she would tear her limb from limb. So that I trembled for Castilla. But Mr. Brinjes looked on without surprise or terror, murmuring, 'Let be, let be; it will do her good. And I have seen them worse.'

And, indeed, presently she arose from the ground and tied up her beautiful hair, which had fallen about her shoulders, and smoothed her disordered frock, and sat down again in the window.

seat, clasping her knees with her hands, moaning and weeping, and rocking herself to and fro. And at this symptom of progress or development of the 'case,' the Apothecary nodded and winked at me, as much as to say that the disease was taking a favourable turn.

He knew the symptoms, this learned physician, who had studied woman's nature where it is the most ungovernable and the most exposed to observation, among the negresses, and, I suppose, applied to more civilised women the rules he had learned among these artless pagans. For, in fact, she speedily ceased either to weep or to moan, but sat upright, drew a long breath, and spoke quite gently and prettily, like a little child who has been naughty, and now promises to be good again.

'I am sorry,' she said, 'that I have given so much trouble—I will never do it again. Mr. Brinjes, you have not had your nap, nor your afternoon punch, through my fault. I will mix you a glass, and then you shall go to sleep.' She did so, and arranged his pillows for him, and in a few minutes afterwards the old man was sound asleep. Then Bess turned to me. 'Forgive me, Luke,' she said, giving me her hand; 'you are my best friend—except this poor old man, you are my only friend. You have never been weary of teaching me how a gentlewoman should behave, so that I should be worthy of a gentleman: and now it has ended in this. He has forgotten me, who have never forgotten him—no, not for a moment, since the day when first he told me—oh! the happy day! He came into the room where I was sitting before the fire and took me in his arms—oh! in his arms! Could I ever forget him? No—no; not for a moment.'

'My poor Bess!' I said. 'What can I say—what do—for you in this dreadful trouble?'

The tears stood in her eyes, but she wept no longer.

'I know,' she said, after a while, 'what I will do. Here is his letter to me.' She drew it from her bosom. It went to my heart to see the prettily worked silken bag she had made for it with her own hands. 'First, you shall take it to him, Luke, and give it to him yourself. Will you do so much for me? It is not a great thing to ask you, is it? Give it to him and tell him that he must read it, and then bring it back to me. And, Luke, dear Luke, you have always been kind to me, always my friend, though you know nothing about love, do you? Else you would understand that a woman would rather die than lose her lover. Give him the letter. When he reads it, he will remember, and then herthen, Luke! — You will tell him—oh! tell him'—she laid her hands upon my arm, and gazed upon me with imploring eyes—'tell him, dear friend, that I am more beautiful than ever—Mr. Brinjes says I am—and that I have tried to teach myself the ways of a gentlewoman, for his sake; and that I can read and write, a little, so that he shall not be ashamed of me; and that I associate no more with the other girls, and have been true to him ever since he went away. Tell

him all, Luke, and everything else that you can think of that is kind and friendly, and that will make him want to see me again. Oh, if he were here in this room with me for one hour he would love me again!'

'I will take the letter, Bess,' I told her, moved to tears; 'and I will give it to him myself, and tell him all that you wish; and more—more, my poor Bess!'

'When will you give it to him?'

'To-morrow. Will that do?'

So with that promise she appeared to be more contented, and went away, though with hanging head—the poor, fond, loving girl!

'You may give the Lieutenant that letter,' said the Apothecary, 'and you may tell him what you please. But, if I know Jack Easterbrook, you might as well try to knock him down with a feather. As for making her his wife, it is out of the question; and to become his mistress without being his wife, Bess would not consent; nor, I think, would Jack ask her. Because, d'ye see, he no longer cares a rope's yarn about her. Yet, if he would come here for a single hour—Bess knows her power—trust a woman who has that power. But I think he will not come. And so there will be trouble—I know not yet of what kind—there will be trouble.'

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN AMBASSADOR OF LOVE.

I READILY accepted the mission; but, like many other ambassadors, I hesitated when the time came to discharge my trust. For Jack was like those Oriental Bashaws who cut off the heads of messengers that bring uncomfortable tidings. First, I thought it would be best to give the letter to him at Deptford, so that, if he was moved by pity, or by love, he might go straight to the poor girl and offer her consolation. But I had promised to give it the very next day. Therefore I plucked up courage, and made my way to his lodgings, the letter in my pocket, knowing full well that he would take my interference ill, being too masterful to brook counsel, advice, or admonition from anyone, unless it came as an order from a superior officer.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning when I reached his lodging in Ryder Street. He was sitting wrapped in a sheet, while the barber was finishing his hair with the powder puff. On the table stood his morning chocolate and cream.

'Ho!' he cried. 'Here is the Prince of Painters. Art come to paint me a portrait, Luke?' (N.B.—I did paint his portrait, and have it still, a speaking likeness, and a better piece of work I never did.) 'Wait a moment, my hearty, till this lubber hath finished the top dressing.'

Presently the man finished, and removed the sheet, showing

beneath it a full-dress Lieutenant's uniform—to my mind the blue of the Navy is far more becoming to a handsome man than the scarlet of the Army. Just as he rose from the barber's hands, the man still standing before him, the implements of the trade in his hand and I beside him—I heard a rustling of petticoats outside, and the door was opened by a lady. She was wrapped from head to foot in a hood, and wore a domino.

'Madam!' said Jack, bowing low.

The lady removed her domino, and laughed, and threw off her hood. Truly a most beautiful creature she was, and most richly dressed. 'Twas the merriest, most roguish face that one ever saw, with dancing eyes and laughing lips. I ought to have known the face, because I had seen it several times; but I did not, because an actress dressed for a Queen or a Sultana seems to change her face as well as her frock. She was, indeed, an actress—very well known to the world, as you would acknowledge did I write down her name, which I shall not do, for many reasons.

'I have found my hero, then,' said the lady, 'in his own—cabin—or is it on his own quarter-deck? Are the decks cleared for action? Are you ready, sir, to engage the enemy?'

'Alas! madam,' said Jack, 'I haul down my colours, and give up my sword.'

He fell upon one knee and kissed the hand which the lady graciously extended to him. Now, observe that she took no kind of notice of the barber or of myself, whom she mistook, doubtless, for an assistant or some other kind of tradesman. I mean that in what followed my presence was not the slightest restraint upon her.

'I am a rash creature,' she said, 'to imperil my reputation by visiting a Lieutenant of the King's Navy alone in the morning. Suppose I had been observed.'

'Madam'—Jack made her so fine a bow that I could not help thinking of the Jack who had come home in rags three years before—'could I desire a more delightful task than the defence of your reputation?'

'I thank you, Lieutenant. But I have a readier defence in my hood and domino. A woman's reputation is quite safe, I assure you, so long as she is not seen. It is in this respect unlike so many gentlemen's honour, which is only safe so long as they are seen. I came not, however, for compliments. First of all, I came to say that I shall be alone this afternoon. You can visit me, if you please. Next, my Lord is coming to supper with me after the theatre. He will presently call here himself, or send a letter, and will invite you to come with him. To oblige me, Lieutenant, you will come.'

'Madam,' said Jack, with a smiling face, 'you were born, sure, to make me the happiest of men.'

'The happiest of men!' she repeated, merrily laughing. 'Oh! what creatures we women would esteem ourselves, since, with

such little trouble, we can make men happy! And how miserable are we that it takes so much more to make us happy! Heigho! You are made happy with a smile, or a kind word, or a hand to kiss, or permission to take supper with us—while we . . . . Oh! we know how little these things are worth. Therefore . . . . No, sir, you have kissed my hand already.' At this point the barber, who had now gathered up his tools, retired from the room. I retreated to the window, and gazed upon the street, as if I was anxious not to listen. She, however, took no notice of my presence. 'Come this afternoon, then, and this evening, after you have seen me from the front, you can join my Lord. But that is not all I had to say, oh, happiest of men!' She laughed again. 'This will make you indeed a happy man, if the roar of the cannons and the groans of wounded men are sweeter than the smiles of women.'

'Indeed, madam, I cannot understand——'

'What I have now to tell will, I dare say, make a round dozen of women miserable, for my hero is a handsome hero. But not me, sir. Oh, pray do not think that! An actress, everybody knows, hath no heart. She is but a toy, to be laughed at and played with, until the men find another which is newer, and hath less of the gilt rubbed off. Yet I shall be sorry, Jack—do your friends call you Jack?—though it is but the day before yesterday that I made your acquaintance, sir.'

'Still, madam,' he persisted, 'I know not——'

'This is a very fine coat, Jack,' she went on, laying her hand, covered with a white glove, upon his sleeve. 'I love the colour. 'Tis a new coat, too, so that 'twill be a pity to buy another. Perhaps, however, this may be made to do, and methinks it will be greatly improved if we put a little lace upon the lapels and cuffs, and change the button for one with a crown instead of an anchor.'

'Madam!' He started, and changed countenance, because these additions mark the rank of Captain. 'Madam! Is it possible?'

'Why, Jack, when a handsome lad does a woman so great a service, and for all his reward wants nothing but to be sent away from her sight, I doubt whether she is not a fool for her pains if she help him—yet——' here she sighed. 'His Majesty's frigate "Calypso," the "Sapphire's" prize, is to be refitted without delay and commissioned. Go, take possession of your own quarter-deck, Captain Easterbrook. Perhaps the next lady whose jewels you save from robbers may make you an Admiral.' With this she curtseyed, so as to sweep the ground, as they are wont to do upon the stage.

'Oh! madam,' he cried, 'how can I show my gratitude?'

'You will not set sail for a week or two yet, I suppose. Come to see me as often as you please. To my brave defender I am always at home.'

She held out her hand, but Jack did not, as I expected, stoop to

kiss it. On the contrary, he disregarded it altogether, and caught her in his arms, kissing her lips and cheeks. I looked to see her resent this familiarity with the greatest show of displeasure, for here was no simple girl of the lower sort, like poor Bess, but a very grand lady indeed, who, for all she was an actress, had all the noblemen of London at her feet. But, to my astonishment, she only laughed, and gently pushed him from her.

'Jack,' she said, 'thou hast truly a conquering way. Let me go, sir!'

She laughed again, in her merry, saucy way; put on her domino, pulled the hood over her head, and suffered Jack to conduct her to her chair, which waited without.

'Hang it, Luke!' cried Jack, when he came back. 'I forgot that thou wast here; and I dare swear Madam never saw thee. Must I never kiss a pretty woman but this virtuous fellow must still be looking on, with open mouth?'

'Shall I tell Castilla, Jack?'—thinking of what might have happened had Bess been there.

'Why, in a kiss there is no harm, surely; therefore there is no need to tell Castilla. If this news be true—and it must be true—Luke, thou art a Puritan. As for a simple kiss which is snatched, they like it, man. Every woman, except Castilla, who is a miracle of goodness, likes such kisses.'

'Who is the lady, Jack?'

'Why, she is a great actress; and the other night, by a lucky chance—I was going home at midnight—I heard a woman's scream and a trampling of feet. 'Twas but an attack upon a lady's chair by footpads, whom it was nothing to drive off without more trouble than to draw and to slash one of them across the face. Then I saw her safe to her lodgings. 'Tis a grateful creature.'

'She seems grateful,' I said. 'Do actresses often appoint commanders to His Majesty's ships?'

'No, Luke; no, my lad, they do not. These appointments are given according to merit, seniority, courage, seamanship, and patriotism. That is very well understood, and it is the reason why everybody is so contented who wears the King's uniform. But suppose that one of my Lords the Commissioners should take a particular interest in a certain lady, and suppose this lady should have eyes to see all these virtues combined in one man; and suppose she should be able further so to persuade his Lordship, who, we will again suppose, knows already something of this man. Confess, then, that it would be a lucky thing for this man were this lady to single him out for the favour of recommendation.'

'Truly, it would be lucky for him.'

'Captain of the "Calypso,"' he exclaimed. 'Why, have I done badly to command a frigate at twenty-four? What care I who appoints me so that I get my chance? Will the world know? Have I done anything dishonourable? My Lord hath already promised me promotion. I looked to be First Lieutenant perhaps—and

now . . . . Luke, my lad, I am so happy that I could e'en go back to Deptford and fight Aaron Fletcher again, as I did three years ago at Horn Fair.'

'Yes, Jack; I could wish in my heart that you would fight him again, if it were about the same woman.'

He changed countenance, but quickly recovered.

'Come, lad,' he said, 'ease thy mind, which is full of something. Let me hear it.'

'Put out of your mind,' I said, 'Castilla and this actress and all women, except one. I have been asked by one whom you should remember to bring to you a certain letter, and to beg, first, that you will read it, and next, that you will, with your own hand, restore it to the owner.'

With this I took the letter from my pocket and gave it to him in its silk bag.

'Why,' he said, breaking into a laugh, as if the matter was not serious at all, 'this is my own letter. I wrote it, I remember, one afternoon, off Cape Finisterre—I remember the day very well. Did the girl—Bess Westmoreland was her name—give it to thee, Luke? Oh! I remember—I was in love with her. A devilish fine girl she was, with eyes like sloes.'

He read the letter through. 'To think that I wrote that letter, and that she believed it! "Most beautiful woman in the world. . . . Fondest lover!" Oho! I wonder how many such letters are written aboard ship the first week after sailing? As for this—why, Luke, you had better give it back to the girl, if she wishes to keep it. Tell her to show it to her friends as the work of a fool. Perhaps her new lover or her husband might like to have the letter. But, indeed, I think she had better burn the thing, in case of accidents. Husbands do not like, generally, to read such letters.'

'She has had no other lovers, Jack, on your account.'

'Pretty fool! Bid her waste good time no longer.'

'She will suffer no man to speak to her, saying that she belongs to you alone, and thinking you would come home to marry her.'

'I suppose,' said Jack, his face darkening, 'that the meddlesome old Apothecary is at the bottom of this foolishness?'

'And myself too. Why, Jack, you solemnly placed her in my charge. You begged me to take care of her. You tattooed her name upon your arm. Look at your arm. What could we think? She has learned things for your sake, Jack—such as gentle manners, and to restrain her tongue, and to govern herself—generally, that is,' because I remembered the scene of yesterday. 'You would not know her again.'

'Well, Luke, she has therefore been so far kept out of mischief, which is good for every girl. And this is a wicked world, and seaports are full of traps for girls. Tell her, however, that now she had better lose no time in looking for a husband in her own station. The fellow Aaron Fletcher would, perhaps, make a good husband, provided he kept decently sober.'

'Do not blame Mr. Brinjes. He hath warned her continually that sailors go away and break their promises. But will you see her, Jack?'

'No. What the devil would be the use of my seeing her?'

I told him how she had put on her best, and gone to wait for him at the Apothecary's, and there waited for three long days. But he was not softened a whit.

'It is their foolish way,' he said. 'We say fond things and promise whatever will please them, and they believe it all. Why they believe the nonsense, the Lord knows. As for the men who say it, and make the promises, they believe it too, I dare say, at the time. 'Tis pretty, too, to see them purr and coo whatever extravagances you tell them. I remember now'—but here he stopped short in his recollections.

'Jack,' I said, 'will you pull up your sleeve, and show me your arm?'

He laughed and obeyed. It was his left arm, and, as we know, it was tattooed all over with the once-loved name of Bess.

''Tis like the arm of any fo'k'sle tar,' he said. 'What was I, in these days, better? Yet, lad, the name hath no longer any meaning to my eyes.'

'Meaning or not,' I insisted, 'will you give her the letter with your own hand? Jack, only let her tell you what is in her mind. That is a small thing to do.'

'It would be more cruel than to refuse to see her at all. Trust me, if this girl gives trouble I shall know how to deal with her. If you have any regard for her, bid her spoil her market no longer, and put maggots out of her head. She would marry me, would she? Kind soul, I thank her for it with all my heart. She would marry me, would she? I will tell thee a thing, my lad, which thou wilt never find out for thyself with all thy paint-brushes—there is no woman in the world more hateful to a man than a woman whom he hath once loved and now loves no longer. It is like coming back to a half-finished banquet when the dishes are cold and the wine is stale. Yet the foolish women believe that once in love, always in love. Better she should learn the truth at once, and so an end.'

He gave me back the letter, and would say no more upon the subject. But he said I must make a picture of him before he went away, and he would be painted in the new uniform, which he would order immediately; and I must go instantly and tell Castilla of his good fortune. Thus was I made a go-between, first to one and then to the other.

'And now, Luke, my fortune is made, if I am only moderately lucky. He who is Captain at twenty-four may well be Rear-Admiral at thirty, and command a fleet at thirty-five; at forty he is certainly a Knight, and perhaps a Viscount; and at seventy he lies in Westminster Abbey. What could I hope for better,' he asked, glowing with the joy and elation of his appointment, 'than

to command a frigate, easy to handle, swift to sail? Why, it will be the "Tartar" over again in the Captain's cabin instead of the ward-room. That was warm work; but I hope to show warmer work still. God knows, Luke,' he said, earnestly, 'I say it not in boastfulness, I can handle a ship as well as the best man afloat, and I can take her into action, I promise you, as bravely.'

So he talked; thinking no more at the time of the actress, or of Castilla, or of Bess, for the thought of any ship was enough to turn his mind from a woman, though he so easily fell in love with a pretty girl. And while he was thus talking of his promotion, and the things he hoped to do with his vessel, there drove to the house a chariot, with footmen, and gold panels, very splendid, and two gentlemen got down. They came to visit Jack. One of them was a man no longer young, yet erect and tall, with aquiline nose and proud eyes. He wore a satin coat, with a sash, and a star blazing with diamonds. The other was in the uniform of the Army.

Jack sprang to his feet, and bowed to the ground. 'My Lord,' he said, 'this is an extraordinary honour. Indeed, I could never have expected it.'

'I have come, young gentleman,' said his Lordship, speaking slowly and with the dignity which became his rank, 'to tender you my thanks for the service which you performed the night before last to a certain lady.'

'My services, my Lord, were trifling, though, fortunately, opportune.'

'Had it not been for your assistance the lady would have lost the jewels which she had worn at the theatre. What other loss or insult she escaped, I know not. I learn that, at her request, you have already paid a visit upon her.'

'At her request, my Lord, I had that honour yesterday afternoon.'

'Believe me, sir, that in return for such a service there is nothing that I can refuse you.' Jack bowed again very low. 'And since nothing will please you so much as to go back as quickly as possible to the fighting——'

'Nothing so much, my Lord.'

'Then you must go. Your name, I find, is already favourably known. I have therefore the pleasure of promoting for the sake of merit alone, which is not always possible for a Commissioner. You are promoted, sir, to the command of the "Calypso," the "Sapphire's" prize.'

'My Lord,' said Jack, again bowing low, 'I have no words, indeed, to express my gratitude for this great, this unexpected, and undeserved favour.' Looking on from the corner of the room, beside the window, I confess I could not help thinking that it would be best for Madam to say nothing about that salute upon her lips.

'Then,' said his lordship, 'no more need be said.' He rose, and added, smiling, 'Since you will have to go back in a few days to salt junk and pea-soup, Captain, make the most of your time

ashore. There will be a supper after the play this evening. I will, if you please to honour me with your company, carry you thither in my coach.'

'I am honoured to be one of your Lordship's guests,' said Jack.

'A rolling deck, a wet cabin, the smell of tar everywhere, great sea-boots, the waves flying over the ship, the enemy pitching cannon-balls on board—that is what you like, Captain Easterbrook. Well, sir, you will have plenty of it, for there will be a long war, if all I hear is true. I shall see you, then, this evening.—Come, Colonel.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

HOW THE APOTHECARY DID HIS BEST.

'TELL her plainly,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'what he said, and how he looked while he said it. Spare her in nothing; so will she the more quickly come to a right mind. What? Didst ever see a surgeon take off a man's leg? Doth he chop here a cantle, and there a snippet, for fear of causing pain? Not he! He ties his bandages and takes his saw, and in five minutes off goes leg; and, though the man may bellow, yet his life is saved.'

There was little hope in her face when I went in to her; the trouble of it made my heart bleed. To think that a woman should still so much love a man who had thrown her away with as little thought as one throws away the rind of an apple. . . . I thought she would have hated him. But no; at a word, she would have arisen to follow and obey him like a slave.

'Bess,' I said, 'be brave.'

'Where is he?'

'He is in London, at his lodgings.'

'Did you give him the letter?'

'I did. He sent it back to you. Here it is. Courage, Bess. No man is worth so much crying over. It is as I told you before. He loves you no longer. When he thinks of the past, he wonders at himself. When he remembers how much he was once in love, he laughs.'

'Doth he laugh? Oh! Luke, can he laugh?' It was wonderful to her that the thing which destroyed all her happiness could be to him only the cause of laughter.

'Bess, my dear, I am grieved to the soul that I must tell you this. Alas! he laughs. He can never love you any more. Forget him, therefore. Put him out of your thoughts.'

'He laughs at the girl to whom he wrote this letter—oh! this dear letter. Why doth he laugh? I cannot laugh, because I loved him.'

She rose, and sighed heavily. 'Well,' she said, 'there needs no more, Luke. I have lost my sweetheart. That matters nothing, does it? Thousands of poor women lose their sweethearts every

year, in action and in shipwreck. No one pays heed to the women. What matters one more woman? Oh! I would to God that he was lying dead at the bottom of the sea; and I—and I—and I——' She rushed from the room with distraction in her looks.

There was great rejoicing at the Admiral's, whither I carried the glad news of Jack's promotion. Castilla attributed it entirely to the extraordinary discernment of his Lordship, who deserved, she thought, the highest credit for discovering Jack's real ability and courage, so that he should be promoted, over hundreds of heads, to the command of a frigate, before he was four-and-twenty years of age. Truly, it makes one no happier to be wiser, and Castilla knew nothing about the great lady of Drury Lane. Heaven forbid that she should learn anything about that ravished kiss!

The day was marked at the Club in the usual manner—viz., by an extra bowl of punch; and I sat beside the Admiral and told the company how his Lordship, in a splendid satin coat, with a red sash and a diamond star, had condescended in person to inform this fortunate young Commander of his promotion. But you may be sure that I told nothing about the actress, even to the Admiral, who marvelled greatly at the boy's success, and wondered, being wise by experience, by whose private interest he had been promoted.

But the woman who ought most to have rejoiced was wandering all night long, in wind and rain, over the desolate moor called Blackheath, raging and despairing because the man who once loved her so tenderly had now forgotten her, and laughed to think that he could ever have thought he loved her. In the morning she came back, mud-stained and draggled, hollow-eyed and wan of cheek, to the parlour behind the Apothecary's shop; and here, presently, she fell asleep, being wholly spent with suffering and fatigue.

Now, when Mr. Brinjes came from his shop and saw her thus asleep and so pale of cheek, he was moved with compassion, and resolved, though he had not visited London for twenty years, that he would himself try to move the hard heart of her lover. Accordingly, he put off his workday clothes, and reached down his great wig and the coat in which he sat at the Club (both of which belonged to the early years of George I.), and so, fully persuaded that he was dressed quite in the modern fashion of a Court physician, he took oars for Hungerford Stairs, whence he walked to Ryder Street.

On the way the boys shouted at him, for he cut the queerest figure, his velvet coat being so old that it had turned green in places, his lace in rags, his old-fashioned wig unkempt and shabby. But he walked briskly, careless of the boys, and carried his gold-headed stick with an air of majesty.

'Jack,' he said, dropping into a chair, 'thou art now, I hear, a Captain. Give me a glass of brandy—'tis a long journey from Deptford—and I will drink to thy good luck. So—this is a pretty, commodious lodging, Jack. I passed some fine women on the

way from Hungerford Stairs. Have a care, my boy. Do not suffer any of the fine birds to bring their fine feathers here; else it may cost thee dear. Be content with some honest wench who will love thee and not try to rob and plunder all the prize-money.'

'Well, Mr. Brinjes'—Jack was not, I think, best pleased to see the old man at his lodgings, and more than suspected the errand on which he came—'can I be of any service to my old friend?'

'That depends, Jack—that depends. The greatest service you could do for me would be not to forget old friends.'

'Indeed, I have forgotten no old friends.'

'Or old sweethearts?'

'Why, as for old sweethearts, my old friend, they may go on so long as to become stale. This you have often assured me as matter of your own experience.'

'It is quite true,' replied the Rover, who had not looked to have his own maxims thrown in his face; 'it is quite true, I say, that woman is by nature a jealous creature—the nearer to nature you get the more jealous you will find her. Something of the tigress in every one. Wherefore Bess, who is as passionate as a negro woman, is more jealous, I dare say, than a London fine lady, who hath not the heart to be greatly jealous. Also, a woman can never be made to understand such a simple thing as that she ought to be contented with the half-share of a man, or the quarter-share, or even a short six months of his life ashore. Nor doth she ever perceive when the time arrives that she should cheerfully make way for another. Yet—poor Bess! I am sorry for the wench.'

'In South America,' said Jack, talking in the same strain, 'where they smoke the cigarro, one that hath been half smoked and thrown away is nauseous if it be taken up and lighted again.'

'It is so,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'Everyone who hath been in Guayaquil, which is nigh unto South America, knows that it is so.'

'Wherefore—' said Jack, but left the conclusions to be drawn by the philosopher.

'The thing is so,' Mr. Brinjes repeated. 'Jack, when thy first letter came I knew that the fit was too hot to last. And when no more came I understood very well what had happened. For my own part, I never loved any woman more than four-and-twenty hours after leaving port. Why, I have seen sailors marrying the day before they sailed, and yet coming on board unconcerned. This forgetfulness is a special gift of Providence, intended for sailors alone. But as for Bess, while you thought no more upon her, she had that letter wrapped in a silken bag, and hung about her neck; and every day she kissed and hugged it, thinking—poor, fond soul! women are fools, yet we needs must feel pity for them!—that the writer, like herself, would never change. She began to learn things for her lover's sake; she learned to read and write; she watched the ladies in church to see how they dress, and how they carry themselves; she made Luke teach her some of their

finiskin', delicate ways, which don't go down with a sea-pie and black beer, such as you used to love in the days before your breeches were white, and your stockings of silk, and while your buttons carried a simple anchor. Moreover, Bess would no longer consort with her old friends, and would suffer none of the men so much as to have speech with her. And she made Luke tell her what words and sayings of hers would offend the ears of gentlewomen. In short, there she is, my lad, a woman ready for you; as to manners, so far as I understand the matter, as fine as a countess; as to good looks, not a countess of them all can touch her; as to figure—Lord! a finer figure was never made; as to temper, a noble temper, my lad, quick and ready to flame up. What? One that will keep her husband alive, I warrant, and stirring. Why, Jack, we talked of a half-burned cigarro. This one is not yet even lighted. Try it again, dear lad. 'Tis made, I swear, from the finest leaf of Virginia. In South America they have none such. As for truth and constancy, I will answer for them with my life: and for affection—why, 'tis nothing less than a madness she hath for thee. Come, what want you with fine ladies? They will but play with you when you are ashore, and forget you when you are at sea, while, as for Bess, Bess will keep your house while you are away, and when you come home, she shall be the tenderest wife in the world and like a faithful slave for service. What? You would say that by birth she is below the rank of a Commander? Jack, hark ye!'—here he whispered, as if imparting a great secret—'a beautiful woman hath no rank. There must be rank for men, otherwise there would be no discipline on board the ship. Rank was invented for that purpose; and the pretence is necessary for order's sake, whether we call each other Duke, Earl, and noble Lord, or Captain, Lieutenant, and Master. Yet it is, even with men, nothing but pretence at bottom. But for women there is no rank at all, whatever they may themselves pretend. Which is proved, Jack. by the fact that great men do constantly fall in love with women of the meanest origin, as witness Charles II. and Nelly Gwynne. You may put Bess upon a throne, and, my word, there is not a Queen among them all would outshine her black eyes and beauteous face. Whereas you will never see a woman of gentle birth fall in love with a clown. Rank is for the ugly women to console themselves withal, by walking in front of each other. Give me another tot of brandy, Jack; and think of her again, I say. Why, I can never get out of my mind that we shall all three—you and Bess and I—we shall all three sail together across the broad Pacific to pick up my treasure, and to burn the town of Guayaquil, where they made me a slave. I cannot die until that town is burned.'

'I know nothing,' said Jack, 'about your dreams. But, for the rest, you are too late, Mr. Brinjes. I have forgotten the girl. All the past foolishness is over and finished.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Brinjes, looking at him as a physician when he

feels the pulse, 'yes': he spoke slowly and sadly, 'I now perceive plainly that it is all over. The symptoms are clear. Your eyes warm no more at the thought of the girl. Her chance is gone. The poor child hath had her time. Well—I shall go home again. Pray Heaven, my assistant hath not already poisoned a customer or two. Jack, keep out of her way. There will be trouble yet.'

'Why, Mr. Brinjes,' he laughed, 'you do not think that I am afraid of a woman?'

'Nay—I said not that. But—well—we shall have trouble yet. And for these Southern Seas, sure I am that I shall see them again before I die.'

So the Apothecary went away, having done what he could, and having failed.

'We sailors,' said Jack to me presently, 'are great fools in our love for taverns and drinking bouts and low company, so that those are right who represent us as so many dull dogs who have no manners, and can do nothing ashore but drink about. Why, when I came home, three years ago, the Gun Tavern was the height of civilisation, the Apothecary's dirty parlour was the abode of politeness, and poor Bess was the finest lady in the land.'

'We are mostly such mere tarpaulins,' he continued, after a space, 'that landsmen do well to despise us, though we fight their battles for them, and care not how we are treated, nor how many hundreds they pass over when they make appointments. Then we fall to cursing the service, instead of our own common habits. There was on board the "Tartar" one of the lieutenants (he is now dead) who was a gentleman—I mean by taste and education, as well as by birth—who sometimes talked with me, saying "that 'twas a pity a lad of my appearance and figure [which he flattered] should not study polite manners for the sake of my own advancement, because, with a little trouble, I might certainly attract attention in high places, and so receive promotion." In this he was partly right, though I now find that great men think they can pay for the service of flattery in promises, as a merchant pays for goods with a piece of paper. But there is a difference, because, if the merchant do not redeem his promise when the day comes, he is dishonoured; whereas if a nobleman doth not redeem his promise, no one throws the fact in his teeth. And if I had not been so lucky as to rescue a certain friend of my Lord, I doubt whether I should have got any appointment, to say nothing of promotion.

'But, lad, consider. Here I live among the best; I am received at a great man's table; I sit in the coffee-house among the wits or the fops, as I please; I go to the theatre, to Ranelagh, and to Vauxhall; there is the gaming-table, if I choose to risk a few pieces; if I am ever disposed for a quiet evening, there is the society of Castilla, the sweetest girl in the world; if for a sprightly party, there are the suppers of my friend—my patron, if you please—and this actress. Think you that after these things I can go back to Mr. Brinjes' stinking parlour, and the Penman's daughter? She may be as

beautiful as he says—I care not. She is certain to have coarse hands, rude speech, and plain manners. You might as soon expect me to go back to the cockpit, and to mess again with the midshipmen, the volunteers, and the surgeon's mates!'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN INTERESTING CASE.

What would be done next I knew not, yet feared something desperate, the case lying (on the one hand) between a woman driven well-nigh mad with love and disappointment, and (on the other) a man of great determination, inflexible to tears and entreaties, and, besides, one who now regarded this poor girl, as he himself confessed, with as much loathing as he had once felt love. I have read in some book of travels that there are certain hot fountains in Iceland which burst forth from time to time with incredible force, and either scald to death those upon whom they chance to play, or, by the ground sinking beneath their footsteps, do suddenly engulf them. We were now—that is, Mr. Brinjes and myself, who alone knew what was threatening—like unto those who walk upon ground where these fountains break out; for we knew not what ruin might fall upon us at any moment, caused by the hand of a desperate woman.

No one knows the trouble the poor girl gave us at this time, with her changing moods, her fits, and her despair. For sometimes she would sit for many hours swinging her body backwards and forwards, tearing a ribbon or a handkerchief with her teeth; sometimes she would sit quite still, her eyes fixed and glowering; then she would suddenly spring to her feet, and cry aloud that she could bear it no longer; sometimes she would threaten death and murder to her false lover, and to any woman who should dare to take him from her; sometimes she would rush from the room and wander away, till she was forced to come back for weariness; and sometimes she would become gentle again, acknowledge her wilfulness, and beg forgiveness for her bad temper and her wild words. But these occasions were rare. She spent the whole day in Mr. Brinjes' house—that is, when she was not in one of her restless moods, wandering over Blackheath, or farther afield, in the woods and fields of Eltham or Norwood. More than once she spent the whole night out, returning in the morning spent with fatigue, her fury only appeased for a time by the weakness of her body. As for her father, she neglected him altogether, so that the poor man was now obliged to provide his own meals, sweep and keep clean his room, and make his own bed. 'Yet,' he said, 'I dare not say a word in remonstrance or rebuke, so terrible is her temper, in which she now seems to surpass her mother, though I confess she doth not beat me over the head with the frying-pan, as my wife was wont to do.

Mr. Brinjes, before whom I have laid the case, advises patience. Well, Mr. Luke, I am a patient man. Of that I am very sure. I have been patient all my life—when I was a boy and the stronger boys hectored it over me; and when I was a 'prentice, and my master half starved me; when I was a married man and my wife scratched, beat, and cuffed me daily; and now when my daughter is grown up. It is not recorded of the Patriarch Job that his wives and daughters were thus ungoverned.'

Sometimes she would speak of her wrongs, and mostly she was grieved because Jack laughed at her.

'If he were dead,' she cried, 'I could weep for him all the days of my life, thinking he loved me to the end. Oh! I am a fool to care for such a man or to cry over him. He laughs at me. I am a fool. He laughs at me. Why did I not forget him the moment his ship was out of sight, and take another sweetheart?'

'Pity,' said Mr. Brinjes, shaking his head. 'A thousand pities you did not.'

'Hold your tongue!' she turned on him fiercely. 'How dare you speak? You were all in league to mock at me. Why, 'twas thus you beguiled the poor black negro girls, you and your pirate crew. And then you laughed at them.'

'Faith!' said Mr. Brinjes, 'if a man desert a black girl she generally murders him for it.'

She looked at him strangely, and rushed away, saying nothing.

'I am sorry,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'that I told her about the negress's revenge, for she is now capable of everything; and perhaps she will go away and put a knife into his heart.' This he said calmly, as if murder was too common a thing to surprise him. 'There was once a girl—'twas at Providence—whose lover a smart fellow, too, and one of our crew—deceived her. What did she do? Pretended to forgive him; passed the thing over; treated it as a joke, and played the loving sweetheart to the life, laughing and singing while she served up the poisoned meat that was to kill him. She put in it the herb stramonium, which there grows wild; and the women know its properties very well. She laughed the louder afterwards, while he twisted and rolled on the ground and bellowed in his agony. The men burned her alive for it, because this was an example that might affect them all; but she cared nothing for the torture, for she had her revenge; and, whatever was done to her afterwards, nothing would hurt her, so long as she could think of that. Look you, Bess is such another as that negro girl. She is as passionate and she is as jealous. There has been murder in her mind ever since Jack came home. I have read the thought in her eyes, and now I have put it into words for her. Trouble will come.'

It was not this crime that I feared, because our women know not, happily, the use of poisons; and the worst among them shrink from taking life. But I feared that she might rashly and in despair kill herself; or commit some act of violence towards Castilla,

if she suspected that Jack was paying her attentions; or that she might lose her reason altogether. And indeed, in those days, I am sure that she was partly mad.

You shall learn what she did.

First, she would hear from her former lover's own lips the sentence of her dismissal. She would read her fate in his eyes. Therefore, one morning, without informing anyone of her intention, she took boat and was carried up the river, and so made her way to his lodging in Ryder Street. No neglect of dress could hide the girl's wonderful beauty, but it was unfortunate, the Captain being now daily in the society of ladies who omit no point in their attire which may help to enhance their charms, that she came to him in a common stuff frock, that in which she was accustomed to do the housework, and a plain straw hat, so that she looked exactly what she was, the daughter of some tradesman of humble station. This, I say, was unlucky for her. Another unlucky thing was that the Captain was not alone in his lodging; and it shamed him that a girl, so common in her dress and appearance, should thus present herself and call him Jack, and remind him of his broken vows. You will expect, when you hear that Bess found a lady in the room, a scene of mad and violent jealousy. But nothing of the kind happened. And yet the situation was one which might very well have caused a jealous woman to fly out, for the lady, who was none other than the Drury Lane actress, was sitting in a chair, and Jack was standing over her. She was looking up at him with her merry laughing eyes, her hair curled over her forehead, and her face as if it was always and naturally bright and joyous (this thing one constantly sees in women who play upon the stage, though I know not why they should be happier than other folk). Her hood, in which she had been wrapped, and her domino, lay upon the table, and she was dressed most daintily in some flowered silk, with laced petticoat and kid gloves. Now, like a true woman, Bess no sooner saw this finely dressed lady than she began to think with shame of her own common frock, her hair so rough, and her coarse hands, and to wish that she had put on her best before she left home. I know not what they were talking about, but though the lady was merry, Jack was serious; to be sure he never passed jests with women, and was not even as a boy over-fond of laughing with girls; perhaps—some philosopher hath remarked—women like best the men who treat them seriously, and as if every interview with them gave birth to what the French call a grand passion.

At sight, however, of Bess as she stood in the open doorway, Jack started and stepped forward as if to protect his visitor, with a round quarter-deck oath.

'Oh! my poor ears!' cried the actress, 'are we on board ship already?'

Then she marked the face of the woman at the open door, and there was something in her eyes and attitude which made her silent. There is a kind of despair which makes itself felt even by

the lightest. This woman she saw had a pale face and large black eyes, which were fixed, steadfastly and piteously, upon the Captain.

'Why do you come here?' asked Jack.

'I came to see you. Oh! Jack!' she gasped, and caught at her heart.

'I have sent you an answer already.'

'I have come to hear your answer from your own lips,' she replied, with trembling voice.

'Come, Bess,' he said coldly, but not unkindly, 'you are a foolish girl; the past is gone. We cannot bring back again what has been. Forget it——and me. And go away. This is no place for you.'

'Forget it? You think I can forget? Have you forgotten, Jack? tell me, have you forgotten?' She clasped her hands and threw them out in a gesture of pain and trouble. 'Oh! have you forgotten—you?'

'I have quite forgotten,' he replied. 'Everything has clean gone out of my mind;' but, of course, his very words betrayed his memory. 'Of course, I remember who you are. Your father taught me arithmetic and writing. You are Bess Westmoreland. We used to play together when we were children. Then I went away to sea, and I remember nothing more.'

'Nothing more,' she murmured. 'Oh! he remembers nothing more. Oh! is it possible? Can he forget?'

The actress looked on with grave attention. She could read the story without being told. Partly, she was studying a delineation of the passion of disappointed love, rendered better than anything she had ever seen upon the stage; partly, she was filled with pity. An ordinary gentlewoman would have felt, as Castilla feels, that such a girl has no business to suppose that a gentleman can love her, the thing being, in her opinion, contrary to nature. But the actress knew better. Besides, she understood, which ordinary gentlewomen do not, that beauty is not altogether a matter of dress. A woman who is always dressing herself in different fashions knows that very well.

'If you wish,' Jack went on, 'I will tell you something more that I remember. But you had better not ask me to tell you that. Best to go away now, and before harder things are said.'

'There can be no harder things said. Tell me what you please.'

'I remember a young girl and a boy. The boy had been six years at sea and among savages, and knew not one woman from another. So he thought he was in love with the girl, who was no proper match for him. And when he had been at sea again for six weeks, of course he had clean forgotten her.'

'And now you have returned, Jack'—she dragged off her hat, and her beautiful black hair fell in long curls upon her shoulders—'look upon me. Am I less beautiful than I was? You, woman'—she turned fiercely upon the actress—'tell me, you, are you in love with him? No: I see it in your eyes; you do not love him.

Then you will speak the truth, and perhaps you will pity me. Tell me, then, am I beautiful?'

'You are a very beautiful girl indeed,' said the Queen of Drury Lane. 'Upon the boards you would be a dangerous rival. Your hair and eyes are splendid; your shape is faultless. Unfortunately, you have not learned to dress.'

'You hear, Jack, what this lady, who is not in love with you, says of me. I have learned things, too, since you went away. I am no longer so plain and rustic, and—— Oh! Jack——' She threw herself at his feet, regardless of the other woman. She must have known that it was a useless humiliation, yet perhaps she was resolved to drink the cup to the dregs. 'Jack, look upon my name printed upon thy arm; think of my hair tied about thy wrist; think of all thy promises! Jack, think of everything. Oh! Jack, be not so cruel!'

Alas! his face was hard and cruel. As she held up her arms in this humility, he made as if he would push her from him, and in his eyes, once so soft to her and full of love, she read now scorn and loathing.

'Go!' he said. 'You have had my answer.'

Then she rose meekly, and drew from her pocket certain presents he had given her—a necklace of red coral, a packet of ribbons, a roll of lace, the gloves, a broken sixpence, and laid them on the table.

'You shall have again,' she said, 'all that you have ever given me, except one thing. I keep your letter, and your promise. That I will never give you back so long as I live. I know not yet what I shall do. . . . I know not——' She grew giddy, and looked as if she would fall, but presently recovered, and without another word she left the room.

'Are there many such girls in love with you, Captain Easterbrook?' asked the actress. There were tears in her eyes, but she put up her handkerchief. 'Are there many such in the world, I wonder? They come not to this end of town. Do you write the names of all the women you love upon your arms? Then they will be a pretty sight for a jealous wife, Jack, when you marry.'

'Let her go.' He swept the poor trifles, mementoes of bygone love, upon the floor. 'Let us talk of something else.'

'She is a very beautiful woman,' the actress continued, disregarding his words. 'There is no woman now upon the boards who would better become the part of a queen; and most certainly none who could better act the part she has just played. 'Twas a moving situation, Captain, though it moved you not. I wonder how many women's hearts thou hast broken, Jack?'

'Why, if we come to questions, I wonder how many men would like to make love to you, fair lady?'

'Captain Easterbrook, it cannot escape your penetration that there is not a pretty woman in the world to whom all men would not willingly make love, if they could. As for constancy, they

laugh at it; and promises they despise; they trample upon the hearts of the foolish women who love them; and they consider jealousy in a woman a thing past comprehension.' She laughed, but her eyes were not so merry as when Bess opened the door. 'Well—I am resolved not to have my heart broken, because I have but one, and if it chance to be broken, I doubt if I could piece it together again. Therefore, my gallant Captain, my brave Jack, I doubt whether it were wise of me to come here any more. You may, if you please, come to my suppers, to meet my Lord and his friends. Look not so glum, Captain. Well, perhaps I may see thee once more before thy ship sails. If I do, promise to pretend a little love for this unhappy love-sick nymph. She is a sea-nymph, I take it—one of those whom the poets call Naiads. Comfort her poor heart a little, and perhaps when thou art gone she may very likely console herself. Alas! always one loves and one is loved.'

'I loved her once. Can she expect——'

'Women are such fond creatures, Captain Easterbrook, that they are not even contented to be a toy for a month or two. As for me, I make men my toys; and as for my heart, it is still mine own. Adieu, thou conqueror of women's hearts and compeller of women's tears. But, Jack'—she laid her hand upon his arm—'look that this poor distracted creature doth not do a mischief to thee or to someone. There was madness in her eyes. I now know how the passion of jealousy should be rendered. It is to stand so, and to look so; and thus to use the hands.' She lost her own face, and became Bess, so clever was she at impersonation, and, in dumb show, went through the pantomime of a scorned and jealous woman. Then she put on her domino, took her hood, and ran downstairs.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW CASTILLA WAS BETROTHED.

I DO not think there is anything in this history more distasteful to Castilla than a certain episode in it, which one cannot choose but narrate. To omit the incident would be the concealment of a thing which clearly shows the disposition of our hero at this juncture of his affairs, when all seemed prosperous with him, but when his fate was already sealed, and destruction about to fall upon him.

Castilla reproaches me with concealing from the Admiral and her mother, first, the previous engagement with Bess, and, next, the acquaintance of the Captain with the actress, of whom mention has been made; and declares that, if the Admiral had known it, he would have forbidden the house to so gay a Lothario. Castilla's general opinion as to her father's character is doubtless correct; but as to her father's conduct under certain circumstances, I prefer my own judgment. Certain I am that if the Admiral (now in

Abraham's bosom) had known both these facts—indeed, I am sure that he knew a good deal of the first—he would not on that account have shut Jack out of the house, nor would he have forbidden him to pay his addresses to Castilla.

'As for me,' she still says, indignant, even after so many years, 'had I suspected the things which you very well knew at the time, sir, I should have spurned his proposals. I have now forgiven him, because, poor boy! he was punished for his weakness in the matter of that witch and her adviser, the Apothecary, whom I believe to have been sold to the Devil! I forgive him freely, and you know, Luke, that I have long since forgiven you for your part in the deception. But there are things which can never be forgotten, though they be forgiven.'

As for my own conduct in the business, I know not why I should have told the Admiral, or Castilla either, that a celebrated actress and toast had been rescued from footpads by Jack Easterbrook; that he supped at her house, in company with other gentlemen; and that she visited him twice, to my knowledge, in his own lodging, the first time in order to communicate to him the news of his promotion, and the second time—I know not why. I was not a spy upon Jack; and, on reflection, I think that if the thing had to be done again I should behave exactly in the same manner.

Nor do I know why I should have warned Castilla about the old love affair. It was over and finished. Surely a woman would not be jealous because a lad of nineteen had made an imprudent promise which he afterwards broke, or because he then fell in love with, and afterwards ceased to love, a certain girl, whether below or above his own rank in life. To be sure, I was certain that some trouble would happen, though of what nature I knew not.

Suffice it to say, therefore, that I heard no more about the actress, but that Jack came often, in those weeks between his appointment and his sailing orders, to the Admiral's, and that he made no secret to me of his passion for Castilla. Also, he took the ladies to various fashionable places of resort which they had never before seen, because there was no one to take them. Thus, we went one evening to Ranelagh, where there was a very pretty concert in the round room, with dancing afterwards, and a great crowd of ladies beautifully dressed, though none prettier than Castilla, to my simple taste. And on another evening we went to Drury Lane, where the actress, Jack's friend, was playing the principal part; and a more merry, light-hearted creature one never beheld upon the stage. I observed that Jack showed no sign of any acquaintance with her, but discussed her performance as a stranger might be expected to do, calling her pretty well as to looks, but then, she was painted up; while as for beauty, give him blue eyes and light hair, at which Castilla blushed. And so home by moonlight, when the watermen are mostly gone to bed, and the river is comparatively quiet. Castilla sat beside Jack in the boat, and I believe he held her hand.

And, on the day after the play, the Admiral was asked and gave his consent to his daughter's engagement with Jack. He gave it with a livelier satisfaction, he said, than he had felt in any previous event of his life. 'Castilla,' he said, 'this is the greatest day of thy life. For thou art promised to the most gallant officer in the King's Navy. I say, to the bravest and the comeliest lad, and to the best heart, though he shirks the bottle and leaves me to finish it. If thou art not proud of him, thou art no daughter of mine.'

'Indeed, sir,' said Castilla, 'I am very proud of him.'

Jack threw his arms round her, and kissed her on both cheeks, and on the forehead, and on her lips.

I say no more. Castilla declares, now, that she never really loved him, though she confesses that she was carried away by so much passion and by her admiration of his bravery. Yet I know not. He was a masterful man, who compelled women to love him, and, as the actress said, he had a conquering way with him. I think that if events had turned out otherwise, Castilla would have become a loving, as well as an obedient, wife. But let that pass. They were engaged, and the club at the Sir John Falstaff had a roaring night, in which Mr. Brinjes heartily joined, because at his age 'twould have been a sin to suffer the fear of approaching disaster to stand between himself and a night of punch and singing and the telling of sea stories.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HOW PHILADELPHY KEPT THE SECRET.

When one reflects upon this time and upon the conduct of Jack Easterbrook, it seems as if at each successive step the unfortunate man advanced one step nearer to his own destruction. Surely, knowing the grief, the resentment, and the indignation which filled the heart of the woman he had cast aside, with no more consideration than if she had been a hedgerow weed, he might well have reflected before sending her intelligence which was certain to drive her into despair. But such as he do never reflect.

Therefore, on the very day when he was affianced to Castilla, he took the surest steps to make Bess acquainted with this certain proof of his desertion. For he led aside the old negro nurse, Philadelphy, and told her that he had a most important thing to communicate, and one which very much concerned her own happiness, and a thing which everybody would be anxious to know; but that it was a profound secret, and must be told to no one, and especially was not to be communicated to any person outside Madam's household.

'I know,' he said, 'that you desire nothing in the world so much as the happiness of your young mistress.'

That she assured him, truthfully, was the case.

'So that I am certain you will rejoice when I tell you the secret. Now, Philadelphy, what should you say if Miss Castilla had a lover?'

''Pends on de young gen'leman, sah.'

'So it does. You are always wise, Philadelphy. What should you say, then, if she was going to be married?'

''Pends on de young gen'leman, sah.'

'You are indeed a wonderful woman. Philadelphy. What should you think, then, if I were going to be that happiest of mortals, Miss Castilla's husband?'

The old woman looked at him admiringly. Then she began to laugh. Negroes are easily tickled with laughter; they laugh if anyone is hurt; they laugh if misfortunes fall upon their friends; and when they are pleased they laugh; Philadelphy, therefore, laughed for satisfaction and joy; not, as Sarai of old laughed, in derision.

'Is dat de troof, Massa Jack?'

'It is the truth, Philadelphy.'

'Ho! ho!' she laughed again. 'Berry fine lover for Miss Castil. Berry fine young man for my young mistress.'

'It is a secret, Philadelphy,' he told her again. 'No one knows it except Madam, and the Admiral, and Castilla, and me. You have been told first of all. That is a great honour for you. But it is a secret as yet. I am to go on board in a few days, and the Lord knows when I shall return. So while I am away do you take care of her, and put in, every now and again, a word for me—you understand?'

She understood very well, and without the aid of the two guineas which he slipped into her hand, that she was to sing the praises of a certain young gentleman. She folded the money in the corner of her handkerchief, and nodded and laughed again. As a secret messenger, or go-between, I think Philadelphy would have had no equal. Her taste, as well as her genius, lay in this art; but, unfortunately, it was not called into practice, because Castilla had but two lovers, one of whom she lost in the manner you are going to hear, and the other she married without any necessity for a go-between at all.

'You understand,' Jack repeated, 'that it is a secret. You are not, therefore, on any account to tie up your head in your red turban, and to carry the news into the town. You must not think of telling the old fellows at the Trinity Hospital. You must not go to Mr. Skipworth, the Barber, with it; and if you tell Mr. Westmoreland, the Penman, or his daughter Bess, you will make me angry. I quite depend upon your secrecy, Philadelphy.'

The old woman nodded and laughed, and laughed again, promising that nothing should drag the secret from her. But when the Captain left her, she hastened to tie her red handkerchief round her head, which was her way of preparing to sally forth from the house; and then she began to mutter with her lips. Next she sat down, and laughed again. While she was laughing, two of

her fellow black servants came upon her; and, being of a quick and sympathetic mind, they sat down and laughed with her, all three rolling about, digging their hands into their sides, and laughing in each others' faces, while the tears ran down their cheeks. When they were quite tired of this exercise they left off, and the two old men went away about their own business without so much as asking why she had set them off into these mirthful fits; and the old woman, setting her turban right, walked off slowly in the direction of the town.

She did, in fact, and as Jack fully expected she would do, everything that she had been carefully told not to do. First, she looked into the gateway of Trinity Hospital. On the sunny side there walked half a dozen of the old men warming themselves. She exchanged a few words with them, admonishing them to keep the secret, and then went on her way. Now, there are no more ingrained gossips than these old almsmen, who have nothing to do all day long except to tell each other stories, for the most part old and well worn, and to retail news. Therefore, as soon as Philadelphy had gone, these veterans, one after the other, left the hospital and made their way, some to the Stairs, and some to the taverns in the town, and some to the Dockyard, spreading the news, for there was no officer in the King's Navy better known than Captain Easterbrook, whom all regarded as a Deptford man, and greatly respected for his courage and his gallant bearing. Moreover, he had among them all the reputation of being a lucky officer. He had gone through so much danger, and hitherto had so miraculously escaped from every kind of peril, that he must needs be a lucky officer to sail with. And now he was going to take command on board as fine a frigate, the French-built 'Calypso,' as there was afloat, and not a sailor but would have liked well to sail with him.

When she left the hospital, Philadelphy looked into the kitchen of St. Paul's Vicarage, just to whisper the news to the maids. Thence she went on her way to the Barber's, and calling Mr. Skipworth to the door, she imparted the news to him, with many injunctions to profound secrecy, which he faithfully and joyfully promised, and kept his promise in the way common among barbers —namely, that he passed on the news in strict confidence and a whisper to every customer in turn who came to be shaved.

Philadelphy next crossed the street and looked in at the Penman's. Mr. Westmoreland was in the shop, writing a letter for one girl to her sweetheart, somewhere at sea, while another waited her turn. In the corner of the room, beside the fire, sat Bess, her hands folded in her lap, doing nothing and paying no heed to what went on. The girls disputed what should be said; the scribe listened, and from time to time put down a sentence, catching at their meaning rather than taking down their words.

'Say I keep true and constant,' said one, 'though all the men in Deptford are asking me to give him up. Tell him that. Tell

him I expect as much from him when he comes home—else, he shall see. And if he dares so much as to look at . . . .'

'I wouldn't tell him that,' said the other girl. 'Tell him that nobody in the town cares a button for him or even thinks about him but yourself. He'll think all the more of you for that. Don't never let him think you care a rope's-end whether he goes after the other women or not.'

Mr. Westmoreland went on writing while they talked. He civilised, so to speak, their letters for the ladies, taking out the threats, the ejaculations, the accusations, the protestations, and the profane words, whereby he certainly did much to strengthen and to sanctify the bond of affection between the sailor and his mistress, since a lover could not but be moved at receiving a letter so movingly and so religiously expressed. It must surely be a great thing for a man to think of his sweetheart as a quiet, sweet-tempered, and well-conducted woman (as always appeared from these letters), capable of expressing the finest sentiments in the choicest language, and full of gentle piety. Pity it was that when the men came home their mistresses should always fail to talk and to behave up to the standard of their letters.

Without troubling herself about the girls, Philadelphy took a chair beside Bess, and began to whisper. Now, so carefully had Bess kept her secret that no one in the place knew a word about it except Aaron Fletcher, and, for reasons of his own, he spoke of it to none. Least of all did this old negro woman suspect it. She whispered what she had to say, and then, with a hundred nods and winks, used as signs of mystery and secrecy, she got up and went away.

Bess sat still awhile. The two girls finished their business with her father, and went away. Mr. Westmoreland looked timidly at his daughter.

'Bess, my dear,' he said.

She shook her head impatiently.

'Is there any chance that you will come round soon, my dear? I wouldn't hurry any woman's temper on my account, though I may say that it is a month and more since I have had any dinner.'

'If I had a knife in my hand this moment,' she cried, springing to her feet and tossing her arms in the air—'if I had a knife, I would drive it into my heart—or into his!'

Her father made haste with trembling knees to return to his writing.

That there are times when the Evil One is permitted to have power over us we are well assured, not only from Holy Writ, but from the teaching of learned doctors. I say not that we are to be excused from the consequence of sins committed during such times, because it is on account of our sins that they are permitted. This poor girl, I am very certain, was possessed by the demons of jealousy, rage, and despair. Else the great wickedness into which she now fell would never have been possible to her. Heaven forbid that I

should attempt to excuse her! But this day she was mad. On this day, as you will presently confess, she must have been mad.

She continued to sit in the same place, hands clenched, with set eyes gazing straight before her, and cheeks white. From time to time her father looked furtively round. But seeing no change, he went on with his work. Presently he became afraid to sit alone with her. He thought she was mad; he feared that she might get up suddenly and stab herself to death, or, perhaps, stab him in the back. He was never a brave or a strong man, and besides, he had already suffered so much from feminine wrath that he considered a raging woman worse than a tigress, and would cheerfully have fought a lion in the arena rather than face his own wife in one of her angry moods. But he had never before seen Bess so bad as this. It wanted a good hour of his usual time of leaving off work, but he got down from his stool, changed his coat hurriedly, and went out to his tavern.

If he went there an hour before his usual time, it was fully an hour after his usual time that he returned. Bess was still in her chair, but she no longer sat upright, scowling and fierce. Her head was buried in her hands, and she was weeping.

Mr. Westmoreland was afraid to speak to her. He crept silently upstairs, and went to bed supperless.

For, in truth, something very strange had happened between the time when the Penman laid down his work and the time when he came home. The jaws of Death and the gates of Hell had been opened.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW BESS WENT OUT OF HER WITS.

IMMEDIATELY after her father had left the house—perhaps he waited until the Penman's departure—a man came to the door and stood without. For a few moments he watched and listened. Then he pushed the door open and looked in. The room was dark, and he could see nothing.

'Bess,' he cried—it was Aaron Fletcher—'Bess, I know you are here, and it is no use hiding. Come out this instant and talk with me, or I will come in.'

There was no answer, and he stepped into the room.

'You can go out again, Aaron,' said Bess. 'I have nothing to say to you.'

'I will go out when I have said what I came to say, and not before,' he replied. 'If you will listen, Bess, I have a good deal to say.'

'Say, then, what you have to say, and begone.' He hardly knew her voice, which was hard. 'Of course, I know very well what you have come to say. When you have said it once, you can go. If you dare to say it twice, I think I shall have to kill you.

But before you take the trouble to say it, or anything else, I tell you that it is no use. There is no man in the world for me now. Don't think of trying.'

'Bess'—the man understood what she meant—'d'ye think that I would come to crow over your trouble? Why—but you don't understand: you never did understand. A man as loves you true can't choose but be sorry for your trouble. I love you that true that I should even like to see you married to him, if he would have you. But he won't; he won't. Don't go to think now, Bess, that I'm glad; though I always knew what would happen, and I hoped that you would perhaps throw him over and take a better man, and then we might have seen him crying and lamenting, instead of you. Pluck up spirit, Bess. Curse him. . . . With his head in the air and his step as if he was on his quarter-deck, and us men were all his crew, and you women were all for his own pleasure! Curse him, I say, for a villain! He went through the town just now dressed as if he was a nobleman, at least, with the people crying after him for luck, and the fools of women calling blessings on his head for a handsome man, if ever there was one. Curse him! Bess, why don't you curse the man who has played you false? Hast never a tongue in thy head?'

It was too dark to discern her face, otherwise Aaron might have been well pleased with the jealous madness which filled her eyes.

Then he cursed the Captain again, and with stronger words; but she answered nothing.

'I knew what he would do. I always knew it. I hate him, Bess! I have always hated him as much as you hate him now; or almost as much, because you must hate him after all he has done so that there is no evil you would not rejoice to see falling upon him.'

He paused for some effect to be produced by his words, just as an angler throws his line and stops to watch his float. But Bess made no sign.

'Who is he?' Aaron went on. 'Who is he that he should have all the good luck and I should have the bad? Why, when he came to the town he was in rags. I saw him come. He was a boy in rags. And now he is a Captain, with a gold-laced hat, and I—— Well, Bess, I am a bankrupt. That is what I have come to. And it is through him! Yes, through him and through that one-eyed Devil, who is Old Nick himself, or sold to him, I am a bankrupt—I am broke! First, through him, I lost my boat, the "Willing Mind," took by a privateer; and then, through him, I lost the prize-money I looked to make; and then, through him, my building-yard was burned. And now I have spent all my money, Bess, and am broke. And all through him! I will be even with him some day, if I swing for it.'

'Say what you have to say, Aaron, and go away.'

'I came to say, then, Bess'—he lowered his voice—'will you have revenge?'

'What revenge?'

'I tried to take it for myself three years ago. Did he never tell you who got him knocked o' the head and carried off to the crimps? 'Twas the sweetest moment of my life when he lay senseless at my feet. I done it, Bess. 'Twas none but me. He got off that time. He won't this.'

'Revenge? Do you think I will let you take revenge for me?'

'Bess—think! He hath deserted you, and broken his promise. And me he has brought to beggary, with the help of his friend the Devil with one eye.'

'I will have no revenge taken for me, I say. Go, Aaron. If that is all you have to say, go, and leave me alone. Revenge will not bring back his heart to me. He loathes me now as much as once he loved me. I saw it in his eyes. Will revenge change his eyes? There is nothing for me but to bear it till I die.'

Aaron sat down on the table. The tempter to evil was not to be sent away by a single word.

'What!' he asked. 'A woman of spirit, and do nothing, though her sweetheart proves false to her, and mocks and laughs at her! Have they told you how he laughs everywhere about you?' (This was a lie: Jack never spoke about her among his friends.) 'Why, the gentlemen all do it; they make bets with each other about such girls as you; and then they go away and tell each other, and laugh about her. Oh! you forgive him. 'Tis sweet Christian conduct. I suppose I should forgive him as well for the loss of the "Willing Mind," and the burning of my boat-yard?' He stopped to see if his words had produced any effect upon her: but she gave no sign. 'You will dance at his wedding, I dare say. He is going to marry the daughter of the Admiral—him with the wooden leg.'

'He is not married yet.'

'He is going to be married,' said Aaron—but this was also a lie—'by special licence, and without banns, to-morrow; for his ship is under orders, and the Captain will set sail in a few days. He wants to be married before he goes. 'Tis a pretty little lady, and he will make her happy. They say he is head and ears in love with her, and nothing too good for her. I dare say he was always a fond lover. You found him a fond lover, didn't you, Bess, in the old days?'

'Are you sure?' she asked. 'Oh! the old woman did not tell me this. Are you quite sure? To-morrow? He will marry her to-morrow? So soon. Oh! is there no hope left at all?'

'The negro woman went about the town to-day telling everybody. You can ask her if it is true. What do I know? The Captain was not likely to tell me, was he? Well, Bess, it must be a pleasant thing for you to be thinking that his arms are now round her neck, which used to be round yours. He is kissing her red-and-white cheek now, just as he used to kiss yours, in the old days when he used to make a fool of you. And to-morrow he will be happy with his bride. That is something to make you feel forgiving and well-wishing, isn't it?'

'Oh! I shall go mad!' she cried. 'I cannot bear it; I shall go mad!'

'To be sure, there are differences. She is a gentlewoman, and you are only a tradesman's daughter. She is soft, and has pretty manners, I dare say, though her father is an old salt. Whatever you are, Bess, no one ever called you soft. She is fair, and you are dark. She loves him, I dare say, better than you ever could. She can wear a hoop, and carry a fan, and paint her face; and as for you, Bess——Why, what is the matter?'

'I will kill him first!' she cried, wildly. 'Aaron, I will kill him with my own hand!'

'Nay, Bess, why with your own hand, when there is mine ready for your service? And as for that, you are in such a rage that you would surely bungle it; ten chances to one you would botch and bungle it. Now, I am calm. If I take it in hand, I shall make as pretty a job of it as anyone can desire. Besides, Bess, if anyone is to swing for putting such a villain out of the way, it shall be me, not you, my girl. For love of you, and hate of him, I should be content to swing. But maybe . . . . Why, Bess——'

'Aaron'—she laid her hand upon his shoulder, catching her breath short—'oh! I would rather see him dead and in his grave than let him marry her.'

'He must be dead to-night then, or he will marry her to-morrow. Hark ye, Bess, the time has gone for crying. We must do it at once—this very night. To-morrow he will be married. The next day, or the day after, he takes the command of his ship. This very evening he hath gone to the Club with the Admiral. He will but drink a single glass of punch with the gentlemen, who will wish him joy, and will then return to his new mistress, with whom he thinks to spend the evening kissing and making love. Do you mark my words?'

'Yes . . . . yes . . . . I am listening.'

'In half an hour or so he will be returning by this road. Suppose, Bess, he should meet us on the way—the woman he has deserted and the man he has ruined?'

'Let us go!' she cried. 'Let us go at once. He shall never marry her. Let us go! Why, Aaron, are you for hanging back?'

'There is time enough—no hurry. See, my girl, I have brought with me—'tis all I have left of my privateering—a pair of ship's pistols.' He lugged them out of his pockets and laid one on each leg, still sitting on the table. 'They are loaded; I loaded them half an hour ago, a brace of bullets in each, and the flints are new. No hurry, Bess. Let us consider.' She was already more than half mad, but he thought to madden her still more. 'Let us consider. All the world knows thy history, Bess.' This, too, was a lie, because no one knew it. 'When you go forth again the women will point and say after you, "There goes the girl who thought to marry the handsome Captain! There goes Bess, who

thought to be the wife of Captain Easterbrook! Pride goes before a fall. Now she will have to marry some honest tarpaulin, like the rest, if any be found to have her." 'Tis a hard fate, Bess. Whereas——'

'Aaron, let us go. Quick! quick! Give me the pistols.'

'Nay—nay. You to have the pistols?' he replied, in no hurry, and still trying to madden her. 'Whereas, if we take care that he shall marry no one, they cannot cry out after you, and he shall not have another wife.'

'I would rather he were dead,' she said. 'Aaron, let me kill him with my own hand!'

'Will you come with me?'—he put up his pistols—'or will you stay with me? 'Tis but five minutes' walk to the dark place in the road where we stopped him once before. But come with me. If you stay here, you will know nothing till I come back, when the job is done. If you come with me, you shall see it done. Why, your revenge will be doubled if you stand by and see it done. And when he falls, Bess, cry out quick that it was thy doing. So, in his last moments, he shall feel that thou hast revenged thyself.'

'Come—quick—before I repent! Let us kill him quickly! Oh! Aaron, I am all on fire! I burn. Come——'

Aaron nodded his head, and leisurely rose, satisfied at length with the spirit of murder which he had called up. It made her pant and gasp and tear at his arm to drag him along.

'One word first,' he said. 'I am not going to do this all for nothing. When the job is done, Bess, you will marry me?'

'Yes. You may marry me, or you may murder me. I care nothing which. Oh! he shall never marry her—never! Come, Aaron, come! We shall be too late!'

I say that she was mad. It could not be in any other mood but madness that Bess would become a murderess. Truly, Aaron was a crafty and cunning man, thus to turn her thoughts to revenge, and to make a murder done for private wrongs—but did Jack set fire to his boat-yard, or take the 'Willing Mind'?—seem as if it was a righteous act of retribution for her sake. Why could he not murder his enemy without dragging Bess into the crime with him? I know not: but I suppose that he thought to bind her to him by the guilty secret which the two would have between them; as if the knowledge would not keep them apart: for, with such a secret, the whole breadth of the world should not be wide enough to keep the two asunder. But it is impossible so much as to guess at the secrets of Aaron's mind at such a moment. One thing is certain, that, like Bess, he was driven well-nigh desperate by his misfortunes, which, however, he was not justified in laying on the Captain. Perhaps he had no thought at the time, except of revenge, and no other desire than to gratify Bess—whom still, I believe, he loved, after his manner—and himself in the same manner, and at a single blow.

'Come,' he said.

Then he directed her to go on in advance, so that if anyone should pass her on the road they might not connect him with her as a companion, and ordered her to wait for him in that place where the grass strip broadened into a little roadside green planted full of trees. Here she was to await him.

'Twas the same place where, three years before, Aaron had made his first attempt, the failure of which might have deterred him, one would think. But it did not. Here he presently joined the girl.

'No one is abroad,' he said. 'I have passed none upon the road. That is well. Heart up, Bess! In a few minutes thou shalt be happy, if revenge can make thee happy. He will kiss his fine mistress no more.'

'Happy! There is no more happiness for me. Oh! Aaron—quick—do what thou hast to do quick, lest I repent and stop thee. Oh! Jack—my Jack—must I murder thee?'

'Keep dark,' said Aaron. 'Why, you are losing heart already. I am sorry you came with me. Keep dark, I say, and look not forth until the shot is fired. As for me, I scorn to hide. I am here to kill him if I can, or let him, if he can, kill me. He has a sword, and I have my pistols. Let him fight it out. It is a fair battle between us. But keep back, Bess, and keep dark. I think I can hear his footstep.'

When, three years before, Jack Easterbrook had walked along the same road at the same time, his head was full of love for the very woman who now stood in the shade of the trees waiting to see him done to death. From the madness of jealous women, good Lord, deliver the men! And from the inconstancy of perjured lovers, good Lord, deliver the women!

As she stood and listened, the sound of his footstep—she could not be mistaken in the step—fell upon Bess's ear, and immediately the Captain himself was to be plainly seen in the twilight, walking briskly along the road. As for Aaron, in spite of his brave words he kept in the shade of the trees, feeling, doubtless, as is the way with murderers, more confidence while in hiding than in the open.

Before she heard his footstep, the poor girl, the prey of all the evil passions, stood breathing quickly, her hands clenched, burning with rage, and mad for revenge. Yet, mark what happened. At the very first footfall, at the first sound of the step which still she loved, the whole of her madness fell from her as a woman's cloak may fall from her shoulders; her heart stood still, her knees trembled, and her love went out again to him. Also she saw—now, was not this a thought sent to her direct from Heaven's throne of mercy in order to save a poor sinner from a dreadful crime?—she saw, I say, in imagination, her lover lying dead upon the ground, his pale face turned up to the stars, never to come back to life again, and she herself standing over him—who had murdered him. Already she felt upon her forehead the seal of murder as it was placed upon the front of Cain. Already she felt the terrible remorse of murder. Near every crime can be atoned for, except murder.

You may rob a man; you may slander him; things stolen may be replaced; things said may be withdrawn: but his life you cannot restore to a man. Therefore there is no crime so dreadful as murder, and no remorse so fearful as that of a murderer, even when his conscience is as hardened as that of Aaron Fletcher himself. 'Oh!' Bess told me afterwards, though the poor girl knew not how to put all these her thoughts into words, but could only speak of them brokenly, 'I thought that if he were to die, I must die too, and that with no hope of forgiveness, so that I should never sit beside him in Heaven, and never ask his mercy. And I saw that if he would leave me, he must; and, oh! how could I be so wicked? How could I? No; it was not Aaron's fault; 'twas my own mad, jealous heart.'

There wanted but a moment when Aaron would have stepped out and discharged his pistols. There was no relenting in him; he had no qualms of conscience and no forebodings of remorse. He had lost everything—his sweetheart, his boat, his business, his fortune—by this man, he thought; 'twas little revenge indeed, in return for so much injury, to kill him. Perhaps, afterwards, with the gibbet in sight and the irons on his legs, he might have felt remorse. But one doubts, seeing how hardened are most of the villains who go forth to Tyburn to the fatal tree, and how little true repentance the Ordinary doth witness.

He was waiting, then, the pistol cocked. His enemy was almost within his reach when Bess rushed out from her hiding-place, crying, 'Jack! Jack! Save yourself! Save yourself!'

He stopped, and drew his sword.

'Fly!' she cried; 'Aaron is among the trees with his pistols. We came to murder thee. Oh! fly for thy life. Let him kill me instead. He shall shoot at thee through my body!'

She stood before him, her arms out as if to stop the pistol-bullet.

'Stand aside, Bess,' said Jack. 'Now, Aaron, ye cowardly, skulking dog, come out! Show yourself, man! Bring out your pistols, I say! Come, ye sneaking, murdering villain!'

Aaron might have shot him on the spot where he stood, breast bared, so to speak, for the pistol. But he did not, because so great is the power of authority over such men as Aaron, when one speaks who is in the habit of command, that he obeyed and came forth meekly, his pistols in his hand, like a dog who comes at call to be whipped.

'Lay down your weapons,' said Jack, sword in hand.

Aaron obeyed, saying nothing.

'So,' said the Captain, 'this is now the second time that thou hast attempted my life. Man, if I had thee on board my ship I would keel-haul thee, or maybe hang thee for mutiny. Know sirrah, that the mere conspiring to murder hath brought many a poor rogue to the gallows. Now, I know not wherefore thou didst resolve to make this second attempt. Remember, however, that

the first score is not yet paid off. Yet I heard some talk of losses and the burning of boat-yards, whereby it seems as if some greater Power had interfered to punish thee. Go, now. Perhaps to-morrow I shall determine what further may be done.'

Aaron obeyed, walking away slowly and sullenly, the pistols lying on the ground.

Then Jack turned to the girl who had saved his life. 'So, Bess,' he said, 'you came out to murder me, did you?'

'Yes,' she confessed.

'I was in hopes that you had laid my words to heart, and had forgotten the past.'

'I can never forget the past. Oh, Jack! 'tis too much to ask of any poor woman. 'Tis too much!' She burst into crying and weeping. 'Oh! I am an unhappy wretch, who would even murder the man I love better than all the world.'

'Nay,' said Jack, 'there is no harm done, because—d'ye see—I am unhurt, and you changed your intention in time. If I did not know thee better, Bess, I might think that this was a trick of thine. But Aaron hates me of old; and you—since I came home.'

'I have never hated you, Jack. God knows I wish I was dead, and out of your way.'

'My poor girl, you are already out of my way, if you would only think so. For the sake of a few love-passages three years ago, why waste and spoil your life?'

'I cannot take back what I have given. To-night they told me that you are to marry Miss Castilla. That made me mad. But I am not mad any longer. Go to your new mistress, Jack. I will give you no more trouble—no more trouble. Make love to her as you did to me. Tear her heart out of her as you tore mine. I will give you no trouble—no trouble at all. I will not try to stand between her and you.'

'Foolish girl! Forget me, Bess, and find another lover!'

'I have tried to curse thee, Jack, but I cannot. Oh! I cannot. I have tried a dozen times. My lips will not form the words, nor would my heart mean them if I could say those words. I have tried this night to kill thee. But I could not. Therefore it is certain that I am not to do thee any harm. This is better, because, whatever happens, thy heart will not be thereby the more hardened against me.'

Jack made no reply. Perhaps he was touched by what she said.

'Go, Jack. Go to thy mistress.' This she said, not rudely or scornfully, but quietly. 'Jack, I know now what has been lying in my mind. It is that I have a message for thee. It is that GOD HIMSELF will punish thee, *and that in the way that will touch thee the deepest.* I know not how that will be, and, for myself, I desire no harm for thee. I will henceforth neither speak nor think hard things of thee. But remember: no other man shall

ever kiss me, because I am thine, Jack—I belong to thee. Oh! Jack, my sweetheart, my love, GOD HIMSELF will punish thee, unhappy boy! *and that in the way that most will touch thee!*'

Jack laughed lightly—yes, he laughed—and went his way.

This is what happened between the time when the Penman left his daughter and the time when he returned. Said I not that the jaws of Death and the gates of Hell were opened on this night?

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HOW BESS RECOVERED HER SENSES.

WOMAN is a variable and a changeable creature. Many poets and philosophers have insisted upon this maxim. Mr. Westmoreland, as well as Socrates, had good reason to feel the truth of it, and could testify to it from his own experience, under the rule of wife first, and of daughter afterwards; though the capricious nature of the latter empress was a kind of heaven compared with the clapper-clawings, rubs, and buffets which marked the reign of the former. The next morning the Penman came downstairs meekly resigned to do the daily necessary house-work, which his daughter should have done—namely, to lay his desk in order for the day's work, find something for breakfast, and, towards the hour of noon, interrupt his calculations in order to prepare dinner of some kind—which had been his lot for the last two months: in fact, though he had not the wit to connect the two events, ever since the return of the Lieutenant on board the French prize. He was, therefore, truly astonished when he saw that the room was already swept clean and tidy, a coal fire lit, for the autumn morning was cold, and his breakfast set out upon the table, just as he loved to have his food, ready to his hand, without any thought or trouble about it; both plenty as regards quantity, and pleasing as regards quality. More than this, his daughter Bess was busy with a duster among his papers—no one but Bess knew how to take up a sheet of paper, dust the desk about and under it, and lay it down again in its place. She wore a white apron, her sleeves were turned up above her elbows, and she was going about her work steadily and quietly, as if nothing at all had happened. More again, when she saw her father, she smiled, and saluted him. Now, she had not smiled, or said a single gracious thing to him for two months and more.

'Come, father,' she said, 'take your breakfast while the beer is fresh and hath still a head. The cask is well-nigh out, and I must have another brew. The knuckle of pork has got some good cuts left yet; as for the bread, it is dry, because it is baker's bread, and last week's baking. But to-morrow you shall have some new home-made.'

This was a very strange and remarkable change. Nothing at all had happened to make her happier. On the contrary, her

lover was certainly going to marry Castilla, and he was going away; her affairs were as hopeless as they could well be. Yet now her soul was calm. It may be that one cannot go on for ever at a white heat of wrath; but some have been known to brood over their wrongs all the days of their lives. Her soul was calm. That was the change which had fallen upon her; her eyes were no longer fierce, and her cheek was no more alternately flaming red and deathly white. Nor did her lips move continually as if she were vehemently reproaching someone. Her face was soft again. She told me afterwards, speaking humbly and meekly, that when she had tried to curse her unfaithful lover, her lips refused; and when she had tried to murder him—her heart failing her at the last—the words that she said to him—namely, that she would seek no more to harm him, and would think no more of him with bitterness, feeling assured that God would bring the thing home to him in such a way as would touch him most surely—these words seemed as if they were whispered in her ears or put into her mouth; and then suddenly, as she uttered them, all the rage and madness which had torn her for two months left her, and peace fell upon her heart. Those who please may put upon this confession any other meaning; for my own part, I can see but one. What that interpretation is, I leave to the reader.

Mr. Westmoreland, however, when he observed this change, fell to shaking and shivering, betraying in his looks the most vivid apprehensions. The reason of this phenomenon was that in the old days before his wife ran away from him—Bess during the last two months had in other respects greatly resembled her mother as to temper—whenever a domestic storm of greater fury than usual was brewing, it was always preceded by a period of unusual activity in the house, with a strange and unnatural zeal for cleanliness and tidiness. The memory of this fact, and of the terrible storms which afterwards used to break over the poor Penman's head, caused this awakening of terror. Was Bess in this respect also going to take after her mother?

'Child,' he stammered, 'what—what—what in Heaven's name hath happened to thee? Have I wronged thee in any way? Tell me, Bess, only tell me, what have I done to thee?'

'Why, father, nothing. I have been ill lately. Now I am better. Sit down and take your breakfast. For dinner you shall have something better than cold knuckle of pork.'

He obeyed, wondering and distrustful.

'I've been ill of late, father,' she repeated; 'and you've been neglected and uncomfortable. It's my fault that the room was this morning up to my ankles in dust and dirt. But I've been very ill, and couldn't do anything but think of the pains in my head.'

'Well, Bess,' he replied, rallying a little, 'to be sure you've been a bit—so to speak—haughty, for the last two months. It came on, I remember, about the time when the Lieutenant came home.'

'It was about that time, father. Two months ago I first began to have these dreadful pains in the head.'

'If it was toothache you should have gone to Mr. Brinjes, and had it out. If it was tic, there's nothing to help it but a charm. But why not ask Mr. Brinjes to charm it away?'

'It was not toothache. I dare say it was tic. But now it has almost gone.'

'Was it, Bess—was it'—he dropped his voice—'was it anything to do with Aaron Fletcher? Sometimes I've thought there might have been a love disappointment. Was it Aaron Fletcher?'

'Aaron Fletcher is nothing to me, and never will be.'

'Well, I'm glad to hear that, Bess, because Aaron is a bad man—a man of violence; a crafty man, my dear—a headstrong man—a man without virtue or religion—and an unforgiving man as well. I've watched Aaron, man and boy, since he was born. Aaron will end badly. Of late he has been drinking, and his business is broken up. Aaron will come to a bad end.'

'Well—that's enough said about me, father. Go on with the cold knuckle.'

'And now shall I hear thee singing about thy work again, Bess? and laughing again just as before? It does my old heart good to hear thee sing and laugh. Nay, that doth never put me out, though I be struggling with the sine and tangent and even with the versed sine. 'Tis when I hear thee weep and groan, and when to all my questions I get no answer, and when thine eyes are red and thy cheek pale, and when all day long I see thee sitting neglectful and careless—'tis then, my dear, that the figures swim before my eyes and the result comes all wrong. 'Tis then that if I try to write, my flourishes are shaky, and the finials lack firmness.'

'Nay, father,' she replied, 'I fear I shall not laugh and sing again all my life. The kind of tic which I have had takes away the power of laughing and the desire for singing. But I hope never again to be so troubled.'

'Alas!' said her father, 'I would I were a preacher, so that I could exhort women to good temper. Sometimes when the learned and pious Vicar is expounding the wisdom of the Chaldees—which is, no doubt, a most useful subject for the Church to consider—I venture to think that a word might be spared on the sins of temper and on the hasty tongue and the striking hand. Truly, for my own part, in all things but one have I been singularly blessed, yea, above my fellow-creatures. For I have a house convenient and weather-tight; I belong to the one true Church, being neither a Papist nor a Schismatic; I am assured of my salvation, through no merits of mine own; I am not of lofty station but obscure, yet not of the vilest herd; I live sufficiently, and, when my daughter pleases to exercise her skill of housewifery, with toothsomeness; no man envies me, and I have no enemies; 'tis true my shoulders are round and I am weak of arm, but what of that? To crown all, I have been endowed by beneficent Providence with the love of

divine mathematics and the gift of fine penmanship, so that my work, whether I copy, or engross, or write letters, or work out logarithms, or consider the theses, lemmas, corollaries, problems, and curious questions advanced by ingenious professors of the exact sciences, I live all day long in continual happiness. I would not change my lot for any other, save and except for one thing. I am filled with pride, which I hope is not sinful, because it is in gratitude for the gifts of Heaven. But there is one thing, my child. I have wanted no blessing in this life, which to many of my fellow-creatures is, for no seeming fault of theirs, a vale of misery and of tears. But, alas! I still found my comfort spoiled by the temper of thy mother while she remained with me. And I feared, Bess—I say that I feared—lest thou might also take after her, and so the scoldings, the peevishness, the discontent, and the violence might begin again. I am not so young as I was then, and I doubt whether I could endure that misery again.'

'Fear nothing, father. Why, whenever did I ask or do aught to make you think that I should upbraid you? As for my temper, I will try to govern myself. Fear nothing, father. To-day you shall have as good a dinner as you can desire, to make up for the past shortcomings. What will you have?' She spoke so gently and softly that her father was quite reassured, and plucked up his courage.

'Well, child, since thou art in so happy a disposition—Lord, grant that it continue!—I would choose, if I may, a hodge-podge, with an onion pie. They are the two things, as thou knowest well, which most I love. With hodge-podge, onion pie, and a merry heart, a man may make continual feast.'

It was not a merry heart that returned to poor Bess, but it was the outward seeming or show of cheerfulness which not only returned but remained with her, so that she now listened to her father's garrulous prattle with apparent interest, and gratified his love of good feeding by toothsome dishes, of which there was no more notable compounder than herself. This day especially she regaled him with a most excellent hodge-podge, in itself a dish fit for a king, and also with an onion pie, a thing counted dainty by those of a strong digestion, though to some who have a delicate stomach it may be thought of too coarse a flavour, being composed of potatoes, onions, apples, and eggs, disposed in layers in a deep pie-dish, and covered over with a light crust of flour and suet.

While Bess was engaged in the preparation of this banquet, the Barber came running across the road, as was his wont when the morning business was completed, and he had any news of importance to communicate—for the spread of news at Deptford is in this way. First it is whispered at the Barber's shop, then it is whispered by the Barber to his customers and his cronies, and next it is carried by them in all directions around the town.

'Have you heard the news, friend Westmoreland?' he asked, with the air of one who is the possessor of an important secret.

'Why,' Mr. Westmoreland replied, 'since I have not seen you before this morning, gossip, how should I hear any news?'

'You will be astonished,' said the Barber. 'Those who hold their heads the highest fall the soonest. One whom you know well, friend, and have known long, is broke. Ah, you may well look surprised and ask who it is. He is broke, who, but a short time ago, was master of a thriving business, and seemed as if he would save money.'

'Who is it, then?'

'I have myself suspected a great while what would happen. For, thank Heaven, I can see as far as most men, and can put two and two together, and am no babbler of secrets, but keep them to myself, or talk of them with my friends over a pipe of tobacco and a glass, being a discreet person. Wherefore, when I heard of certain accidents, and saw in what a spirit they were received, I made up my mind what would happen.'

'Who is it?' asked Mr. Westmoreland, when this garrulous person had partly talked himself out of breath.

'It is a man whom you know well; and Bess, here, knows him very well, too.'

'If, Mr. Skipworth,' said Bess, 'you would tell my father your news, we could then talk about it afterwards.'

'Why, then, Aaron Fletcher is broke. That is the first news. Since the burning of his yard, he hath done no work, not even to putting up some shed and carrying on the business. What were we to think of that? When he went privateering he made but little prize-money, but had quickly to come home again. Thenceforth he hath been living on his stock, and hath now come to an end, and is broke. This morning he was to have been arrested. The writs are out for him, and the officers came to seek him with intent to take him to the Marshalsea, where his case would have been tried at the Palace Court.'

'Would have been tried?' asked the Penman. 'Is it not to be tried, then?'

'I said *would*, because for one thing which his creditors thought not of—he hath escaped them. Otherwise he would have languished in gaol until his death.'

Here the Barber wanted to be asked further what was that happy incident which had enabled Aaron to 'scape prison; for one who is a retailer of news loves not to expend it all at a breath, but must still keep some back.

'His father,' he continued, 'was a substantial man, and saved money, which the son has spent. He inherited, besides the building-yard, a good business, and a fast smack, the "Willing Mind," for his trade across the Channel. Now the smack is lost, the yard is burned, the business is ruined, and the money is spent.'

'An idle fellow,' said Mr. Westmoreland; 'a fellow who loved not work. But how hath he escaped his creditors?'

'He will not go to prison; for, in the night, we now learn from

certain authority, he walked over to Woolwich, where he hath enlisted in the Marines, and so is beyond the reach of his creditors, who cannot now arrest him. So he escapes the prison, and exchanges the Marshalsea for a man-o'-war. Maybe 'tis better to be killed by a cannon-shot than to be starved in a debtors' gaol.'

So, after more reflections on the folly of young men and the certain end of laziness and extravagance—which have been put more concisely by King Solomon the Wise—the Barber returned to his shop; and before noon everyone in Deptford had heard the surprising news of Aaron's fall.

This intelligence made Bess tremble, thinking on the madness of the last night, when this young man was so desperate, being now assured that he was bankrupt, that he was ready to commit a murder, caring little whether he was found out and hanged, or no; and she herself was so desperate in her wrath and jealousy, that she was ready to commit murder in order to prevent another woman's happiness. Why, what would be the condition of that guilty pair now, were Jack lying dead? Since, however, Aaron was bankrupt it was now certain that he had already resolved to go away and enlist in the Marines, when he came to her and proposed the crime; and that he intended to leave the dreadful secret of the murder, had it been committed, to herself alone—a burden greater than she could bear.

For Aaron, 'twas the only way of escape, to 'list in one of His Majesty's regiments. Naturally, he chose the Marines as the branch belonging to the sea. To carry a musket on board a King's ship, after being a Lieutenant in a privateer, not to speak of commanding the 'Willing Mind,' is to come down in the world, indeed. Yet that he cared for little, considering the alternative of a debtors' prison, terrible to all, but most terrible to a man who, like Aaron, had spent all his life in the open air, and most certainly it is better for the country that a stout and active fellow should be fighting her battles than that he should be laid by the heels in a prison doing nothing. Mark, however, what followed. Aaron walked to Woolwich that night, where there is a depôt for Marines, which in that war represented twenty-five companies. He enlisted in the morning. When they began to teach him his drill it was found that he already knew as much as is expected of any recruit when he is passed for service. Therefore he was, with others, marched to Chatham ready for embarkation. There are many remarkable coincidences in this history, but there is none more remarkable than the fact that Aaron should have been shipped as a Marine on board the very ship, the 'Calypso,' of which the man he had tried to murder was Commander. This circumstance, with the consequences which followed, I can regard as nothing but providentially ordered.

When Aaron discovered who was the Captain of the ship, he fell at first into despair, and was ready to throw himself overboard, looking for floggings continually and on the merest pretext, with

keel-haulings and every kind of tyranny, oppression, and punishment. But he presently found that the Captain took no kind of notice of him, even when he was on sentry duty on the quarter-deck, and seemed not even to know that he was on board.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HOW PHILADELPHY REFUSED A BRIBE.

When Bess had given her father his hodge-podge and onion pie, which he received as some compensation due to him for all past privations and recent neglect, she left him, and repaired to the Apothecary's.

Mr. Brinjes was already wide awake, and in earnest conversation with Philadelphy. On the table between them lay the famous skull-stick, object of the deepest veneration and awe to the negro woman.

'What will you do for me,' he was saying, 'if I give you this stick? I am old now, and I have no enemies to punish, nor many friends to protect, and I want nothing for myself except that which not even an Obeah man can procure for himself—his lost youth. . . . What will you do for me, Philadelphy, if I give it to you?'

'Massa Brinjes'—she clutched at the stick, and held it in her arms, kissing the skull—horrid thing!—which grinned at Bess as if it were alive, 'I will do everything. Ask me—tell me—I will do everything.'

'We shall see. Those who possess this stick—it must be given, not stolen, or the virtue vanishes—can do whatever they please. Why, if it were your own, there would be no woman in the country so powerful as you. If you have enemies, you could put Obi on them, and go sit in the sun and watch them slowly dying—Ha? I have seen the wise women on the West Coast sitting thus, and watching outside the hut wherein their enemy lay wasting away. And if you have friends, think of the good fortune you could bring them. Why, Miss Castilla you could marry to a Lord; not a beggarly ship Captain, but a rich Lord.'

'No—no,' said Philadelphy. 'She shall marry Mas' Jack. No one like him.'

'You could make her as rich as you could desire. If she wants children, you could send them to her. No need, then, to consult the cards, or to watch the birds, because you could have everything your own way to command, once you get the skull-stick. As for wind and rain, you could call for them when you pleased. See'—he rose and looked up at the sky, which was covered with driving clouds, the wind being fresh. 'See—you would like rain! 'Twould be good for Madam's garden, would it not? I call for rain.'

Strange! As he spoke, the drops pattered against the windows. Though 'twas a light and passing shower, yet it seemed to fall in

reply to his call. He might have seen it on the point of falling, and prophesied after the event was decided: truly, Mr. Brinjes was crafty and subtle above all other men. But Philadelphy jumped, and kissed the stick again. 'You see, Philadelphy,' he went on, 'what you could do with this stick. It is wasted on me, because I am too old to want anything. I am past ninety, and you, I should think, are not much over seventy. If I die before I give the stick away, it is lost: its virtue is gone. But there is still time. What will you do for me if I give you the stick?' He paused and considered a little before he went on again. 'Perhaps you think it will only compel rain, and is of no use as regards persons. Well, here is Bess to testify that I put Obi on Aaron Fletcher. He was formerly a thriving man, until he offended me. What hath happened to him since? First, he was tortured with toothache; next, his smack was taken by French privateers; then he went privateering himself, and did no good; then his boat-building sheds were burned, with all his tools and timber; lastly, he went bankrupt, and hath now, I fear, enlisted in the Marines to escape a prison. I have removed the Obi, and now leave him to his fate. What will you do for me if I give you the stick?'

Again the old woman clutched it and kissed it, with the unholy light of witchcraft in her eyes. I wonder if the Sorceress of Endor had a skull-stick.

'Stop a moment, Philadelphy. What will you do for me?'

'Everything, Massa Brinjes. Nothing in the world that I will not do for you.'

'There is only one thing that I cannot make my stick do for me. Everything else in the world I can do. But this thing I cannot do, and you can.'

Still clinging to the stick, the old woman implored him only to let her know what that was, in order that she might instantly go away and do it.

'Bess hath a sweetheart, and he hath proved a rover, as many sailors do. Bring him back to her arms and keep him constant, and I will bestow the stick upon thee.'

'Nay,' Bess cried quickly, 'since my sweetheart loves me no longer, I will have no charms to make him. I have promised, besides, that I will trouble him no more.'

'Tell me his name,' cried the old woman, regardless of Bess. 'Only tell me his name, and I will do it for her.'

'Can you bewitch a man at sea?'

'I can, I can,' she cried. 'I will make his heart soft for her, so that he will forget every other woman, and want none but Bess. Why,' she said, 'every negro woman knows a love charm.' This with some wonder that a wizard of Mr. Brinjes' power, and possessed of an Obeah stick, should not be able to do so simple a thing. 'I can make him love her all the same as he loved her at first. I can make him love her so as he shall never love another woman. If that is all, Massa Brinjes, let me carry away the stick.'

'Softly, softly. The thing is not done yet. If I give thee this stick I shall never get it back again. Wherefore, let us have it paid for first.'

'Tell me his name, then.' Philadelphy turned eagerly to Bess, 'Only tell me his name, girl, and I will make the charm to-day'

'Nay,' Bess repeated, 'I want no charm to bring him back.'

'Be not so proud, Bess,' said Mr. Brinjes; 'you shall have what your friends can get you. As for you, Philadelphy, be not too ready. What? You think I would give such a stick for a trifle? You think Bess's lover is some common sea-swab, I dare say—a master's mate, at best, or a gunner, or perhaps a shipwright. No, no; her lover is another guess kind, I promise you.'

'If he was an Admiral, he should come back to her. Tell me his name.'

'Even if he were promised to marry your young mistress, Miss Castilla?'

A negro woman cannot turn pale, particularly one so black as Philadelphy, nor can her colour come and go like that of a white woman: yet she changes colour when she is moved. Philadelphy not only changed colour, but she gasped and looked upon Mr. Brinjes as one astonished and dismayed.

'To marry Miss Castilla?' she repeated.

'What if Bess's lover had deserted her for your young mistress?'

'Don' say that—oh! Massa Brinjes, I cooden do it—no—no—I could do anything else, but I cooden do it even for the stick.'

'I say, Philadelphy, what if his name was Jack Easterbrook? Why, it is Jack. It is the Captain who was Bess's lover. Where were your eyes not to discover that? You, a witch! Where were your eyes, I say?'

'I cooden do it—no—I cooden do it.'

'Look at the stick again, old woman. Think of the joy of having the stick your own. Think of what you could do with the stick to help you. What is the Captain to you, compared with the possession of the stick?'

She looked at it with yearning eyes. Suppose that the thing which all your life you have been taught to regard as the symbol and proof of power was to be offered you at a price. This was the old negro woman's case—she could have the Obeah stick in return for—what?

'At the worst,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'it would make her unhappy for a week.'

'No—no—Miss Castilla, she dun set her heart upon the Captain.'

'Well,' the tempter continued, 'with the help of the stick you can not only find a rich and noble lover for her, one who will make her happy, but you can also give her a charm and make her forget the Captain.'

'No—no,' said the old woman 'Miss Castilla will never forget the Captain.'

'Then, when his fancy returns to his old love, which it will do

before long, your young mistress will be made unhappy. Come, Philadelphy, think of this stick; think of having it your own—the great Obeah stick.'

'Who are you'—she turned fiercely upon Bess—'to take away a young gentleman officer? Stay with your own people, and let the Captain stay with his. Massa Brinjes, if I give you the secret to keep alive—ten—fifty—a hundred years if you like—will you give me the stick?'

'If you have that secret, old woman,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'I will tear it out of you, if I have to rack every joint in your body with rheumatism. If you know that secret, it is as good as mine already. No, Philadelphy, it is the Captain or nothing. Look at the stick again, Philadelphy. Take it in your hands.'

'Oh! I will get the girl—what a fuss about a girl! As if she was a lady!—I will get her any other man in Deptford. Plenty handsome men in Deptford.'

'I want none of her charms, Mr. Brinjes, for Jack or anyone else,' Bess said again. 'Let her have the stick, if you like, and let her go.'

'There!' Philadelphy cried, triumphantly. 'You see? She wants none of my charms. Why, there, take the secret instead, and let me have the stick, and you shall live for a hundred years more.'

Here one cannot but admire the way in which these two magicians believed each in the other's powers, but were uncertain about their own. For—first—if Mr. Brinjes, by means of his skull-stick, could draw down rain from the sky, why could he not move the Captain's heart? And, next, if Philadelphy could turn a faithless lover back to his fidelity, why could she not so order Castilla's heart that she should resign the Captain without a pang? But this she could not do. Yet the wizard believed in the witch, and the witch in the wizard.

'It must be Jack,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'or nothing.'

'Then,' she replied, sorrowfully, 'it is nothing. Put away the stick, Mr. Brinjes, lest I die of longin', and let me go.'

He replaced the stick in the corner. The skull grinned at the old woman as if in contempt because she had missed so magnificent an opportunity.

'Very well, Philadelphy,' said Mr. Brinjes, returning to his pillows. 'I do not believe you know any charm at all. You know nothing. You are only an ignorant old negro woman. In Jamaica they would laugh at you. You are not a wise woman. You only pretend to make charms. Why, anybody could make as good a charm as you.'

She shook her head, but made no reply, still gazing at the stick.

'All your tricks are only pretence. You cannot, in reality, do anything. As for your cards, you cannot even tell a fortune properly. If you can, tell Bess hers.'

Philadelphy drew from her pocket a pack of cards, greasy and well worn, and began to shuffle them and to lay them out according

to her so-called science. Bess, who would have no charms, could not resist the sight of the cards, and looked on anxiously while the old woman laid out her cards and muttered her conclusions.

'The dark woman is Bess,' she said—'the fair woman is Miss Castilla—the King of Hearts is the Captain. Oh! the dark woman wins!' She dashed the cards aside, and would go on no further, but, with every sign of alarm and anxiety, rose up, and, tightening her red turban, she hurried away.

'Always,' said Bess, 'she has told me the same fortune. Always the same. Yet I know not.'

'These divinations by cards,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'are known by many women even in this country, where there is so little wisdom. I wonder if Philadelphy lied when she offered to sell me that secret. If I thought she had such a secret—but I doubt, else why doth she continue so old and grow so infirm? No; she hath not that knowledge, which I must seek on the African coast. Bess, take courage. We will sail to that coast—you, Jack, and I; we will be all carried away together; and, first, I will find that secret, and, next, we will go forth to the Southern Seas, and there dig up the treasure of the great galleon.'

She shook her head.

'As for me,' she said, 'there will be no sailing away, with you or with Jack, nor any happiness at all; and as for you, Daddy, when you are carried away it will be with feet first.'

'Perhaps! Yet I doubt! For I do continually dream of those seas, and clearly discern the ship, with myself upon the poop, and the island not far off, where at the foot of the palm-tree there lie the boxes. All shall be thine, Bess—to dispose of as thou wilt.'

'Why,' said Bess, simply, 'what should I do with it but give it all to Jack?'

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HOW BAD NEWS CAME HOME.

NOTHING at all was heard of the 'Calypso' for three or four months. It was not even certain whither she had sailed, except that she was with Sir Edward Hawke's fleet. But it was known that M. Thurot had got out of Dunquerque with five frigates, on board of which were a large number of troops, with intent to make a descent upon Ireland, and we conjectured that perhaps the 'Calypso' might have been ordered to join the squadron in chase of that gallant Frenchman. But that proved not to be the case.

It was in January—namely, on the evening of the 15th of January in the year 1760—that the news arrived which filled the hearts of all with shame and confusion. 'Twas a wild and tempestuous night, fitting the nature of the intelligence which then arrived. The wind blew up the river in great gusts, and the rain drove slanting into the faces of those who were out. I remembered, afterwards, that I had

met Philadelphy in the morning. The old woman was always full of omens and prognostications. Sometimes she had seen a ghost in the night—surely there was never a greater ghost-seer than this old negress—and sometimes she had been warned by one of the many signs which terrify the superstitious. 'Hi! Massa Luke,' she said, in her negro way, which it is unnecessary to imitate, 'there's bad news coming, for sure. Last night the cock crowed twice at midnight, and an owl screeched round the chimney; there was a dog barking all night long, and I saw a ghost. There's bad news coming!' I asked her what the ghost was like, but she refused to tell me. Well, it is true that on many other occasions she foretold disaster (because to this kind of witch there are never any signs of good luck), and her prophecies proved naught. But on this day, alas! she proved a true prophetess of evil.

At the Sir John Falstaff some of the company, including Mr. Brinjes, who was never late, had already arrived, and were hanging up their hats, the candles being lit, a great coal fire burning, pipes laid on the table, and the chairs set.

'There hath arrived bad news,' said Captain Petherick, the Commissioner of the Yard. 'I heard talk of it at the Navy House this morning. It is said that we have lost a frigate. They say also that we have lost her cowardly—a thing which one is not ready to believe. But I have not heard the particulars, and I know not the name of the craft. 'Tis pity, but 'tis true, that there should be found in every war cowardly commanders, in British as well as in French bottoms. Those of us who have memories can remember the last war, gentlemen, Well, we must quickly build or capture another ship, and find a better Captain. We will give the command to Jack Easterbrook.'

So saying, he sat down and began to fill his pipe leisurely. Just as he had finished these words, and before Mr. Brinjes had time to do more than to open his mouth, there came running into the room the landlord, having in his hand the 'London Post' of the evening, brought down the river from town by some boatman. His face was pale, and his eyes full of terror.

'Oh! gentlemen,' he cried, 'gentlemen! Here is such news! I cannot trust my eyes. For God's sake read the newspaper! But who shall tell the Admiral?'

'Is it news from the Fleet?' asked Captain Petherick.

'It is, your Honour.' The man looked as if he was afraid to tell his news. 'Oh! gentlemen,' he repeated, 'who shall tell the Admiral?'

'Is it bad news?' asked Mr. Brinjes.

'It is the worst news possible. Gentlemen—it is—it is . . . . he looked about him to see if the Admiral was, perhaps, present hitherto unseen. 'It is news of—of—of Captain Easterbrook gentlemen. Of no other, indeed.'

'What!' cried the Apothecary; 'bad news? The worst news?

Then is our boy dead?' He sat down in a chair, and looked from face to face. 'Jack is dead.'

'It is the worst news possible,' repeated the landlord.

'Jack is dead,' said all together, looking at one another in dismay.

'Jack is dead,' repeated Mr. Brinjes. 'There hath been an action, and Jack hath fallen. Poor Bess! Yet, now he will never marry the other.' The company knew not what he meant. 'Well, every man must take his chance—I looked for other things—but . . . . Jack is dead! Some die young, and some die old. To those who die old it seems as if their years have been but a dream. What matters, therefore, when a man dies? Wherefore, devil take all black negro witches with their lying prophecies!' Again the company asked themselves what Mr. Brinjes might mean.

The landlord shook his head.

'No, sir. No, gentlemen. Oh! you will not understand. Read the "Post." Captain Easterbrook hath lost his ship.'

'If,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'he lost his ship, of course he first lost his life or else his limbs. He would not be taken below while there was yet life enough left to fight his ship.'

'Gentlemen,' cried the landlord again, 'your Honours will not listen. It is in the "London Post."'

He held out his newspaper, but no one offered to take it. Everyone knew now that something had happened worse than death. Then they heard the Admiral's step as he entered the house and stumped along the passage with his escort of negroes.

'Gentlemen,' said the landlord again, 'who shall tell him?' Again he held out the paper. They looked at each other and held back. No one offered to take the paper; they were afraid. It is one kind of courage to walk up to a cannon's mouth, and another to become a messenger of bad tidings.

Then the Admiral came in, followed by his two negroes. He saluted the company cheerfully, and gave his hat and cloak to his servants. This done he took his seat in his usual place. But the other gentlemen standing about the fire did not, as was customary, follow his example. They hesitated, looked first at the Admiral and then at the landlord.

'Gentlemen, be seated,' said the Admiral.

'Sir'—it was Mr. Brinjes who spoke—'it appears that bad news hath arrived.'

What news?'

It is—news of Captain Easterbrook.

Is the boy . . . is the boy dead?' asked the Admiral.

'Sir, we cannot but suppose so. For he hath lost his ship. But as yet we have not seen the "Post".'

'No—no,' the landlord again interposed, holding out the "Post," which no one would take. 'Gentlemen, stand by me, I beseech you. Sir, the Captain is not dead.'

'Then, poor lad,' said the Admiral, 'he is grievously wounded,

and like to die. Our boy, gentlemen, is grievously wounded, and like to——' Here his voice failed him.

'No, Sir, he is not wounded.'

'Then he is shipwrecked and drowned. Why is the man staring like a stuck pig? Alas! gentlemen, our boy is drowned.' But the Admiral looked uncertain, because the company, now understanding that something out of the common had happened, looked at each other and at the landlord, and spoke not.

'Sirs'—the landlord again offered the newspaper to one after the other, but no one took it—'the news is here printed. Otherwise, God forbid that I should dare to say such a thing. Your Honour, it is here stated that the Captain struck his colours in the very beginning of the action.'

'Struck his colours!' The Admiral caught the arms of his chair, raised himself as quickly as a one-legged man may. 'Struck his colours! Jack struck his colours! Ye lie, ye drunken swab! Ye lie!' With that he delivered so shrewd a blow with his gold-headed stick that, had not the landlord dodged, he would have been enabled instantly to carry the news into the next world. 'Ye lie, I say!' Here his voice failed him, and his face became purple, and he reeled and would have fallen but Mr. Shelvocke and Captain Petherick caught him and set him in a chair, where he gasped and panted and looked as if he was about to have a fit of some kind. As for the landlord, he stood in a corner, pale and trembling.

'Give me the paper,' said Mr. Brinjes, when the Admiral had somewhat mastered his passion. 'Let us at least read what is here stated.' He read it silently. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'this is a strange business. I understand it not. Here is more than meets the eye. It is a thing hard to understand. I will read it aloud. Courage, Admiral, the story is impossible as it stands.

'"Despatches have been received from Sir Edward Hawke. He reports an affair which, unless later intelligence contradict it, is more discreditable to British honour than anything which has been done since the cowardly flight of Benbow's captains. The frigate 'Calypso,' Captain John Easterbrook, with her consort the 'Resolute,' Captain Samuel Boys, fell in at daybreak with a squadron of the enemy, consisting of three frigates, one of them being the 'Malicieuse.' The names of the other two are not given. The Frenchmen bore away on discovery of the Union Jack, and the British ships gave chase. After some hours the 'Calypso' came up with the 'Malicieuse,' the hindmost of the three, the 'Resolute' being then a quarter of a mile or so astern, though crowding all sail. It is reported by Captain Boys, he being then on his quarter-deck and glass in hand, that the engagement was commenced by the 'Malicieuse' firing a shot from her stern-chaser which struck the 'Calypso'; that then he saw Captain Easterbrook strike his colours with his own hand; that his officers ran about him, and he cut one down; that the Frenchman immediately lowered a boat and boarded the prize, driving the crew below; and that the other two French

frigates backed their sails, whereupon he withdrew from the chase, thinking it useless to engage three vessels at once; that he was not pursued; and that he knows no reason at all why the ship was surrendered without firing a shot. 'Tis thought that the 'Calypso' hath been conveyed to Brest. This account is the more extraordinary by reason of the character for gallantry possessed by Captain Easterbrook, who was one of Captain Lockhart's Lieutenants on board the fighting 'Tartar.'"'

'This is a very strange story,' said Captain Petherick. 'By your leave, Mr. Brinjes, I will not believe it.'

'Thank ye, old friend,' said the Admiral, hoarsely. 'My boy surrender? Never, sir, never. Damme, Mr. Apothecary, wilt thou try to persuade us that such a thing is possible?'

'Nay, Admiral, nay; I do but read what is printed. Lord forbid that I should doubt the boy. What is this? Ay, they have begun already their pestilent verses. 'Twill be just as it was with Admiral Byng, when the journals were full of squibs. Listen now. Oh! they care nothing about truth so long as they can turn a verse and raise a laugh. Listen.'

'"The following lines have been picked up at the Rainbow. 'Tis thought they come from the Temple:

> The Frenchman crowds all sail in fright,
> The Briton crowds all sail to fight:
> The brave 'Calypso's' gallant tyke
> Claps on all sail in haste to strike.

And these have been recited at Dick's—

> The Captain brave his ship would save,
> And so this great commander
> Cries, 'Heroes, I will scorn to fly
> While I can still surrender.
> Stay, Frenchman, stay: your shot may play
> Too rough among my hearties;
> I fear no foe: but yet I know
> To strike the better part is.'

'Oh! 'tis a lie—'tis a lie,' the Admiral groaned. 'Gentlemen—my boy, Jack! Gentlemen, I say. . . .'

'We cannot believe it, Admiral,' said Captain Petherick. 'Yet it is in the despatches.'

'There is something we are not told,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'But, without doubt, the "Calypso" is taken prisoner, and someone on board struck the colours.'

The Admiral stared about him with amazement and confusion in his eyes. Then he rose slowly. 'I shall go home, gentlemen. I wish you good-night. Someone shall swing for this lie. . . . Someone shall swing.' He moved towards the door, forgetting his hat and cloak, which one of the gentlemen reached for him. 'Someone, I say, shall swing for this—this diabolical lie about my

boy Jack. We shall see—damme, I say, we shall see! What, sirrah, the lantern not lit?' Indeed, it was not the duty of the negro to keep the candle burning through the evening; but the Admiral belaboured him so lustily that the fellow roared, and the company trembled lest he should be killed. But a negro's head is hard. Then the Admiral walked away. This was his last night with the Club; he came no more to the Sir John Falstaff.

The gentlemen, without his presence, sat awhile speechless But the landlord brought in the punch, and they presently filled and lit their pipes and began to whisper.

'Do you think, sir,' asked Mr. Basil of the Apothecary, 'do you think that the story may be in any point of it true?'

'Why,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'as for truth, I suppose that is never got at, and this nut is hard to crack. How such a man as Jack Easterbrook could haul down his flag before the action began passes understanding. But then how men like Captain Boys and his officers should be deceived, when only a quarter of a mile distant or thereabouts, one cannot understand either. And that the ship is taken one cannot doubt.'

'If he comes home he will be tried by court-martial, and for cowardice,' said Mr. Shelvocke.

'That is most certain,' said Captain Petherick: 'and if he surrendered cowardly, he will be shot. Gentlemen, this is an event which affects our own honour. For though the boy is no blood relation of any here, he hath been our pupil, so to speak. We have taught him. He is our son in whom we hoped, and in whom we believed. It is not the Admiral alone who is struck. It is this company of honourable gentlemen who would have maintained to their dying day that Jack Easterbrook could never turn out a coward. Why, a more gallant lad never trod the deck, as witness Captain Lockhart, of the "Tartar," where he served. I say, gentlemen, this affects us all. We are brought to shame by this untoward and unexpected event.'

'Perhaps,' said one of the company, 'the Captain was shot at the outset, and it was the First Lieutenant who hauled down the flag.'

But that seemed impossible; no one could fail to discern Captain Easterbrook at so short a distance, if only on account of his great stature. Besides, Captain Samuel Boys was known for a sober and honest man, who would certainly not invent so grievous a charge against a brother officer.

'Perhaps,' said another, 'the ship was foundering.'

Then they read the statement again, trying to extract from it, if possible, some gleam of hope or doubt. But they found none.

'Gentlemen, said the Apothecary, 'I hope I shall not be thought to be a man over-ready to believe this monstrous thing if I submit that it may be true, and that the act was made possible by one of those sudden madnesses which the people believe to be the possession of the Devil. We read of poor women, in such fits, murdering their own tender children; and of husbands beating to

death their wives, without a cause; and of learned scholars who have gone forth from their books to hang themselves without any reason for despair. No man is at all times master of his own actions; and doubtless there are in the brain, as in the body, weak places, so that just as one man falleth into an asthma, or a rheumatism, or the gout, by reason of bodily imperfections, so may a man by mental disorder commit acts of false judgment, foolish conclusions, and mad acts for which there is no accounting. Nor can we anticipate or prevent such attacks. I once knew as brave a fellow as ever stepped, to snivel and cry for an hour together: and why? Only because he was sentenced to be hanged. Yet he walked manfully to the gallows in the end. And another, who fell on his knees and wept aloud because he was to have a tooth out, which he dreaded more than he did the three dozen he had received a month before.'

'Then, you think, sir,' said Captain Petherick, 'that the boy may have been mad?'

'I know not what to think. I tell the company what I have seen. Some acts, I declare, are not consistent with what we know of the man's previous life. What should we think did the Reverend Vicar of St. Paul's suddenly fall to singing a roaring tavern song of Poll and Nan? Yet that would be no whit the worse than for Jack to become suddenly coward. There are some who say that men are thus afflicted by Divine Visitation. That may be. A congestion of the liver and the mounting of vapours to the head may likewise produce such effects. Yet we do not call a liver disease a Divine Visitation. I remember once, being then on the coast of Yucatan, a very singular thing. Landlord, the bowl is out. I say, gentlemen, that I once witnessed a very singular thing. There was a young fellow with us of five or six and twenty; a daredevil dog who had faced death so often that he feared him no longer, and was looked to to lead the way. The enemy showed fight, and we came to close quarters, when the word was given to board. What happened? He leaped upon the enemy's deck with the greatest resolution, and then, to our surprise, he turned tail and fled like a cur, dropping his arms and crying out for fear. We tried that man, gentlemen, when we landed, and we shot him for cowardice, just as Jack Easterbook will be tried and shot, if he be fool enough to come home. 'Twas a pity, too, for after he was dead we found out the reason of this strange behaviour. He was bewitched by an old woman to revenge her grand-daughter, his sweetheart, who was mad with him on account of his many infidelities. The girl came out and laughed in his face while he was led forth to execution. Afterwards, she confessed the crime to some of the girls; and when they began to talk of it, she took to the woods, where, no doubt, she presently perished. The old woman we punished. The night before she was executed, I went privily to her and offered her poison, if she would give me her secrets, and especially the secret by which she knew how to prolong life as much as she pleased. But she refused, being an obstinate old woman; and next day the men gave

her a bad time, being mad with her. Gentlemen, we are not on the Spanish Main; and there is no witch among us, except Philadelphy, the Admiral's negro woman, who would not, if she could, put Obi on Jack. Yet if this story be true, then I doubt not that our boy was clean off his head, and no longer master of himself, when he struck his flag.'

CHAPTER XL.

HOW THE NEWS WAS RECEIVED.

The next despatches brought confirmation of the news. There could now be no doubt at all that the 'Calypso' had been surrendered by the Captain, and that without striking a blow. The consternation and shame which fell upon us cannot be described; nay, not upon us only, but upon the whole town of Deptford, to whom Jack was nothing short of a hero.

'There is nothing,' said my father in the next Sunday's sermon, 'there is nothing, my brethren, upon this earth which is stable. Our riches make themselves wings and fly away; disease falls upon the stoutest and strongest of us; old age palsies our limbs; death snatches away the youngest and brightest. Even in the very spring and heyday of life, when promise is strongest and hope most assured, the qualities of which we are so proud may fail us suddenly, and without warning—so that the brave man may lose his courage, the loyal man become a traitor, and the strong man fall into the weakness of a girl. Remember this, my brethren, and in the day of your strength be humble.' Those who listened applied the words to the disgraced Captain, and hung their heads.

But the Admiral and his household were not in church. They sat at home, the flag half-mast high, Madam and Castilla, by the Admiral's orders, in black, as if in mourning for one who is lately dead.

'He is dead, Luke,' said the brave old man. 'My gallant boy, the son of my old friend, my son-in-law who was to be, is truly dead. How he died, and where, I know not. But he is dead, and his body is occupied by an evil spirit. What? Shall we be ashamed because this cowardly Devil hath struck the colours? 'Tis not our boy. He is dead. Castilla weeps for him; but, as for me, I always looked that he might die early, as so many others do—being killed in action, or cast away. As yet we know not how he died, or how the Devil was permitted to walk about in his body. Perhaps we shall never learn.' But here he broke off, and choked.

What an ending! What an ending is here!—truly, what an ending! Why, if one had foreseen it, 'twould have been a Christian act to put a knife into the boy's heart when he came here sixteen years ago; and a joyful thing, had one only known beforehand what would happen, to be hanged for it afterwards.'

I said that I hoped he would be able to write us some words of consolation.

'Consolation? Why, the Captain struck his flag without firing a shot! Consolation? There are some things, my lad, which can never be forgiven or forgotten. Cowardly to surrender is the chief of these. Cowardly! Oh! that it should seem possible to use that word of our boy!'

Then I said that it would be best for him to stay abroad, and never to return to England.

'Ay,' said the Admiral, 'unless he should resolve to come back and be shot. The women say he is bewitched. But who should bewitch him? No: our boy is dead, and some evil spirit is in his body.'

This was the only consolation that the poor old Admiral permitted himself. Yet it did not console. He stayed at home, being so covered with shame that he durst not venture forth, lest the boys should point at him. He told me so; and it went to my heart thus to see this brave old man wounded and bleeding, yet to know no single word of consolation.

'Luke,' said Castilla, 'do not, if you please, mention his name to me. We must resign ourselves to the Heavenly Will. No doubt this affliction hath been designed for some wise end.'

This must always be the Christian's view; yet, in my ignorance, I have sometimes questioned the course of events which thus afflicted and presently destroyed a brave man in his old age, undeserving of this disgrace.

I know not who first started the rumour—perhaps it was Mr. Brinjes himself—but it was presently spread over all the town, that the Captain was bewitched. And so great was the popular indignation that, had the people known what had passed with Bess Westmoreland, I make no doubt they would have murdered her. Fortunately, there was no suspicion at all. No one had seen them together, or knew that there had been any love-passages between them, or any jealousy. Most certainly they would have murdered her, the women especially being full of wrath against the unknown author of this misfortune.

But I was uneasy—listening to the talk of these termagants, as they gathered in the streets, and cried out what should be done to the witch—lest someone should turn suspicion upon Bess. As for Philadelphy, who would have been suspected, it was known that the Captain was to marry her young mistress, and therefore she could not be the witch. Now, of wise women, who know the properties of simples, and can read the signs of good and bad luck, and tell fortunes by cards, there are always plenty; but of witches there was in Deptford only one, and of wizards only one, and both of them known to be friends of the Captain.

'It is true, Luke,' said Bess Westmoreland, when I found her in the usual place. 'Do not talk as if it were not true, because I am assured that the news is true. Why, I knew that something

terrible was going to fall upon him. Mr. Brinjes says there may be some mistake in the evidence of Captain Boys; but I know better. It is quite true. What will happen next, I know not. But I shall have my lover back again, whatever happens. The fortune always ended in the same way with love at last.'

'Whatever happens, Bess? Why, he is now a prisoner of war, and, unless exchanged, will remain a prisoner till the war is ended. And if he ever return he will be tried and shot.'

'Then he will stay where he is, and send for me,' she replied, as if the recovery of her lover, should that be brought about, would be cheaply purchased at the cost of his honour. But women know little of man's regard for honour. 'He will send for me; and if it were to the ends of the earth, I would go to him.'

'Bess,' I whispered, 'it is rumoured abroad in the town that he was bewitched. Is there anyone who knows what passed between him and you when last you saw him?'

'No one knows except you, Luke. Aaron knows, but he is away.'

'Then speak to no one about it. Let it not be suspected that you predicted this disaster, or the people, I verily believe, would burn you for a witch, Bess.'

'Why, are they such fools as to think that I would suffer a hair of his head to be touched if I could help it? For Jack loved me once—how he loved me once!—three years ago! And I—oh! I love him always. What do I care what he has done? Let him but hold up his finger to me and I will go to him. I will be his slave. Oh! Luke, I would suffer gladly that he kicked and flogged me daily so that he loved me. What do I care about his disgrace? That touches not me. My Jack will always be the same to me, whatever people may say of him.'

'My poor Bess,' I said. 'Indeed, he hath a constant mistress. But, my dear, do not look to see him more. I fear we shall never be able to set eyes on his face again, for he cannot show his face among his fellows. The common fellow pays for his sins with a flogging, and when his back is healed, he thinks no more of the matter. But the Captain—look you, Bess—it is a most dreadful thing. For, whatever happens, he can never more sit among honourable men.'

'He shall sit with me, then,' said Bess. 'As for what I told him, the words were put into my head—I know not how. They were a message. I was made to tell him. They were not my words; wherefore I knew that they would come true.'

Thus, while the rest of us were overwhelmed with shame, she who loved him best (because now I clearly understood that Castilla had never loved him so well, else she could not have been so quickly and so easily resigned to her loss) thought little of the deed and much of the man. Thus it is that a woman may love a man, so that whatever he does, whether he succeed or fail, even if he

does disgraceful and shameful things, she will love him steadfastly In Bess's simple words, he is always the same man for her.

'As for me,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'I am very sure that the lad was bewitched. I know not by whom, because Philadelphy would work all the charms she knows for his help, for Miss Castilla's sake. But bewitched he was. Wherefore, Luke, my lad, I shall wait until we learn where he is at present bestowed, and then I shall send him a letter. He must not look for a return to England at any time, unless he joins himself with the Pretender, and hopes to return with him. But no: he must never return at all. And as for that young man, he is now near forty, and will never come to England again, I take it. But though Jack cannot come back here, I see no reason why we should not go to him; and so we might together set sail for the Southern Seas, and there dig up my treasure, and equip and man a stout squadron for the harassing of the Spanish fleets.'

'Why, Mr. Brinjes,' I told him, 'you are now an old man—ninety years and more, as you have told us often. Is it for a man of ninety years to brave the hardships of the sea once more?'

'Hardships! Little you know of peaceful sailing among the sunny waters of the islands. There are no hardships and no discomforts. Why, 'twould make me twenty years younger to be back again in the Pacific Ocean and in those latitudes. I should be little more than seventy. What is seventy? A man is still green at seventy: he is in the full vigour of his manhood; there is nothing that I could not do at seventy, ay, and as well as the youngest of them all, save that my limbs were a trifle stiff, and I no longer cared to run and jump. But that stiffness sometimes falls on a man at six-and-thirty, wherefore I could not complain. Seventy! Ah! To be seventy again, with thirty years more to live! And then, if one were so lucky as to fall upon the great secret, another thirty, and another thirty after that, and so on as long as one chose to live. And that, my lad, I promise you, would be until I understood clearly what was on the other side.' Thus he went on chattering, having almost forgotten how we began to talk: to forget the things of the present day is ever a sign or proof of great age. 'Ah!' he sighed, heavily, 'would to God that I could find myself once more aboard a tight vessel on the Pacific Seas, with plenty of men and lemons, and some music for the lads in the evenings, and, for amusement, taking a ship now and then, and making the Spaniard walk the plank. Jack should be our Captain, and Bess should go with us—I could not go away from Deptford without Bess, and her heart is always set on Jack. Yet, I do not remember any women among the Rovers except Mary Read and Ann Bonny, and they dressed like men, and pretended to be men. They sailed under Captain Rackam, and a brave pair of wenches they were. I dreamed last night that we were all three on the poop of as fine a schooner as one could wish, bound for the South Seas, by way of the Indian Ocean.'

So we lost our hero. At least so we thought we had lost him. He was taken to a French prison. He would never be so mad as to return to England, where certain death awaited him. We should never see him again. And, as Captain Petherick truly said, we were all ashamed by an act as truly cowardly as ever British sailor committed. The newspapers continued to speak of it; the evidence of Captain Boys was printed in full, and there were more epigrams. And then other things happened; and the loss of the 'Calypso' would have been speedily forgotten but for a surprising and unexpected turn, which was, so to speak, a second act in this tragedy of Jack Easterbrook's end.

Truly surprising and unexpected it was, and the intelligence of it threw us all into an agitation worse, if possible, than the first. For we were assured that the worst was over. The first blow fell upon us like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, and now we were rising to our feet again (except the Admiral), stunned and confused, yet in a fair way of recovery, as happens in every earthly calamity, else 'twould be impossible to live. The child we love—nay, the woman we love—dies, yet behold the sun rises and sets, and presently the daily life goes on as before, and the loss is partly forgotten. Suppose, however, the woman was not dead, but came to life again, only to die with more cruel suffering and with shame!

What happened, in a word, was this.

The crew of the prize had orders to take the 'Calypso' to Brest, which was the nearest French port. They ordered their prisoners below to the quarters always designed for men in that unhappy position —namely, the forward portion of the cockpit, where they have to sit in gloom, lit only by one great ship's lantern all day and all night, save for such times as they are allowed on deck for fresh air, in gangs and small companies. When the Englishmen were driven below, and the prize crew appointed, the 'Malicieuse' parted company, and the 'Calypso' was left to make her own way to Brest.

'On the second day,' we read in the 'London Post,' 'the prisoners rose, and became again masters of the ship, which was brought into Spithead under the First Lieutenant, the Captain being kept a prisoner in his cabin. This extraordinary reversal of fortune, and other circumstances attending the case, have excited the greatest interest. The Lords Commissioners have ordered the ship to be brought to Deptford, where the court-martial on Captain Easterbrook will be held.'

As is usual in news published by authority in the 'Gazette,' and copied by other newspapers, there were no particulars of the manner in which the ship was recovered, except that she was navigated by the First Lieutenant. Had the crew, then, mutinied against their Captain, and confined him to his cabin? If not, how was he a prisoner?

It was impossible for me, who knew the whole circumstances of the case, not to feel that in this surprising reversal of fortune and in

the ordering of the court-martial, there was a direct interposition of the hand of Providence, such as may well make the guilty tremble. To lose life, and honour as well, which is dearer than life, as a penalty for broken vows, seems a terrible punishment, and out of proportion to the offence. But it is not every inconstant lover who hath expressly called down upon his own head, as Jack did, the wrath of God in case of his inconstancy. Man cannot with impunity call upon the name of the Lord. There is a story of one who learned how to draw the lightnings out of Heaven, but he drew them upon himself, and so perished. Was not this the fate of Jack Easterbrook?

Alas! we were now wholly without hope. For needs must that he be tried; and he was condemned already, and as good as shot. While he was prisoner with the French, his life at least was safe; and if he chose never to return, he could certainly never be tried; and so his case would be in the course of time forgotten. But now he must be tried, and he must be condemned.

'But,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'he shall call me as a witness; and I will prove from books and from mine own experience that there have happened many cases of sudden madness, and that in such an access or seizure a man is not master of himself. And those who have travelled much in countries where the sun is hot, and especially those who have wandered, as the boy did, among savages, with insufficient food, and perhaps no covering for the head, are more than others liable to such fits—instances of which I can produce. It will also be set forth that the Captain, not long before he sailed, received so heavy a blow upon the head that he was carried senseless through the town and across the river. Such a blow may of itself produce the effect of sudden madness. Men who have proved themselves brave sailors and fond of fight do not, unless from this cause, suddenly become cowardly. Why, he crowded all sail to get within range of the enemy.'

'Yet he struck his flag,' I said. 'Is every man who runs away, after marching resolutely to meet the enemy, to plead that he was smitten with a sudden madness?'

As for the value of such evidence, I know not what it would have availed, but I think it would have availed nothing in the eyes of the officers who formed the Court. But, as you will presently see, it never was produced. Perhaps the knowledge of what he could testify gave the Apothecary an inward assurance which comforted him. For he showed no alarm, and maintained stoutly that his own evidence, with the prisoner's previous good conduct, would get Jack acquitted, if it did not get him reinstated in command.

But Courts, whether martial or civil, do not thus examine into motives and causes. If a Judge were to hear why a pocket came to be picked, or by what train of circumstances an honest man has been turned into a rogue, there would be no punishment at all, but rather general commiseration for sin, and forgiveness of all sinners, on the score of human weakness and the strength of temptation.

As for Bess, when she heard that the Captain was a prisoner and on his way to meet his trial, she said nothing, except that whatever happened the end was certain; and she waited. Her wrath and fierceness were all gone; she was now gentle and calm, though her cheek was pale, and round her eyes a black ring, by which I knew that she slept little and thought of Jack continually.

CHAPTER XLI.

HOW THE 'CALYPSO' CAME HOME AGAIN.

Lo! when we awoke in the morning, the 'Calypso' herself was lying in the river, moored nearly opposite to the mouth of the dock.

I made haste to the King's Yard, in order to hear the news, and there, as I expected, I found a little knot of gentlemen, including Captain Petherick, the chief officer of the Yard, and a few who, like myself, were brought thither by anxiety and curiosity. They were earnestly conversing with the First Lieutenant of the ship. He was a man whose hair was now grown completely grey (wherefore he no longer used powder), being some fifty-five years of age, but for want of interest never having got any higher. By birth he was a Scotchman; he had, like many of his countrymen, a hard and strongly marked face, and his manner of speech was hard and slow, so that, though he had such a tale to tell as surely never was heard before, his manner of telling it never varied even in the most astonishing parts of his narrative, except that now and then he broke off to express his own opinion on the matter. We presently, however, discovered that he felt great commiseration for the unhappy fate of his Captain, young enough to be his son, and that he held much the same view as the townspeople—namely, that there must be witchcraft at the bottom of the affair. We learned also that the recapture of the ship would now present a very different complexion, being due, not as had been supposed, to a general rising of the crew, but to the most astonishing courage of the Captain himself, and the display of reckless daring in a single-handed attack upon the prize crew, such as one had never read of or heard of before.

As regards the striking of the colours, there was nothing new in what we learned. The Captain with his own hand did certainly haul down the flag without firing a shot. Against that damning and capital fact nothing could be said. But as for what followed, you shall hear the First Lieutenant's story.

'When the Captain struck his colours, which he did with his own hand, the men looking on in sheer amazement, I myself ran to him, crying, "For God's sake, Captain! for God's sake, Sir, consider what you do!" But the Captain drew his hanger and slashed at me, so that, though the flat of the sword only struck me, I fell senseless. Then, as I have since been told, those officers whose

place was on deck stood back, terrified by the wild looks and furious gestures of the Captain. So great was the authority which he possessed, that not a man among them all dared so much as to murmur. Then the Frenchmen boarded us, and all, except the Captain, who was suffered to remain on deck, and myself, because I was senseless, were bundled below, and the hatches clapped down. When I presently recovered, I too was allowed to remain above. Now, for two nights and two days, the Captain sat on the quarter-deck upon the trunnion of a carronade, his hat off, his hands upon his knees, his eyes blood-red, his face pale. Gentlemen,' cried the First Lieutenant, breaking off suddenly at this point, 'twould have moved a heart of stone only to look upon the Captain in this misery of shame. Despair was in his eyes as he turned them from the sea to the ship, and from the ship to the sea. As for what the men think, there is but one opinion: that it was the work of the Devil. He was bewitched or possessed. I know not if we have the right to try a man for an act done under demoniac possession, which we know to be sometimes permitted. But the madness had now left him, and he was in his right mind again.'

There was not one of those present who heard this with a dry eye. But more moving things still were to follow.

'It was on the third day after the surrender,' the First Lieutenant told us, 'and in the forenoon, the usual guard being set, the French officers and sailors all armed, and their Commander on the quarter-deck. In the waist was gathered together a small party of prisoners taking their spell of fresh air; they were lolling in the sun, or looking over the bulwarks in the hope of discovering an English flag. Nothing was further from their thoughts than an attempt to recapture the "Calypso." On that point there could be no doubt. They talked with each other in low voices, being very much dejected at the position of their affairs, and the prospect of a French prison, and they looked at their Captain, who sat bare-headed on the quarter-deck. He, too, like themselves, was unarmed, and he sat without moving or making any sign of life.

'Suddenly he sprang to his feet and caught the French officer, a much smaller man than himself, by the throat, tore his sword from him, and cut him down. The two sentinels rushed upon him with their bayonets, but he lightly leapt aside, and cut them down too. Then, armed with the sword, he sprang into the waist, and crying, "Men of the 'Calypso,' to the rescue of your ship!" he attacked the Frenchmen, cutting them down and driving all before him like a madman.

'There is a tall stout fellow aboard, one of our Marines. He was on deck at the time, and was the first who recovered presence of mind (the rest being clean taken aback by the suddenness of the thing). He seized a rammer and sprang to the side of the Captain, fighting with him and protecting him. Mark you, if it had not been for that brave fellow the Captain would have been killed a dozen times over—as I doubt not he wished to be, seeing the

reckless way in which he attacked the enemy. Nay, I wonder that in spite of this help he was not killed, seeing that they fired their pistols in his very face, and thrust at him with bayonets, and cut at him with swords; but all in vain. A fine sight it was, and such as will never be witnessed again by any of us, to see this hero fighting the whole of the prize crew singlehanded, save for the Marine, who seemed to have no other thought than to protect his Captain, and laid about him with his rammer as if it had been a quarterstaff.

'Well, gentlemen, you may be very sure it was not very long before the rest of the English sailors on deck joined in with a true British cheer, fighting with whatever weapons they could pick up —namely, one with a marlingspike, one with a hammer, one with his fist, one with a dead Frenchman's bayonet, and so on, until in a few minutes we had the satisfaction of driving our conquerors under hatches, calling up our crew, and running up the Union Jack. The Captain it was who hauled it up with his own hand. His face was black with powder, and streaked with blood, though he had not received a scratch; his hands were red with blood, and his sword streaming; on the deck lay a dozen dead and wounded, though some of them only stunned with the Marine's rammer. When the flag was up, the Captain saluted it, and called on his men to give three cheers, which they did with a will. After that he ordered a double ration of rum, and every man to his duty.

'Then he turned to me. "Mr. Macdonald," he said, "I would to God your Captain was lying dead among those poor wretches,' pointing to the slain. I told him to take courage, because it was by this act, and his alone, that the vessel was recaptured. Then he hesitated awhile, and fetched a sigh as if his heart was breaking.

'"Whose hand hauled down the flag?" he asked.

'I waited to hear what more he had to say.

'"Where is the man," he asked, "who fought beside me just now? I mean the man who interposed to save my life?"

'I called the man, who stepped forward and saluted.

'"So," said the Captain, "'tis my old friend. Sirrah, twice hast thou endeavoured to take my life, out of revenge. Once hast thou saved it. Thou hast thy revenge at last, and in full measure. Return to duty."

'I know not, gentlemen,' continued the First Lieutenant, 'what the Captain meant by those words, for the man saluted and stepped back to his place, making no reply, either by look or speech. Then the Captain gave me his last orders. "You will take the command of this ship, Sir," he said. "You will enter in the Captain's log a full account of the circumstances connected with the surrender and the recapture of the 'Calypso.' Disguise nothing, Sir. Nothing must be omitted. Write that the Captain hauled down the flag. Write that the Captain cut down the First Lieutenant, who would have remonstrated. Write that there was not a single shot fired, and the enemy carried less weight of metal and a smaller crew."

'"With respect, Sir," I told him, "I shall also write that the Captain also retook the vessel single-handed."

'"Write further—that the Captain gave over the command to you, with instructions to take the ship to Spithead, the whereabouts of the Admiral not being known, there to report on what has happened, and to await the instructions of my Lords the Commissioners."

'Gentlemen,' the First Lieutenant concluded, 'I obeyed orders. I sailed to Spithead, and reported the circumstances of the case. The Commissioners have ordered me to bring the ship round to Deptford, the Captain aboard her, prisoner, waiting his court-martial. We hope that, though he certainly struck the colours, his subsequent conduct may save his life. For most certainly he was mad when he did it, or bewitched, or possessed of a devil. But he is mad no longer. I forgot to say, gentlemen, that although for two days he refused to take anything, and I verily believe he intended to starve himself to death, he has since eaten and drunk heartily.'

This was the story as the First Lieutenant told it.

Now, when we heard it we were in a doubt what to do. For to neglect the unhappy prisoner altogether would seem heartless, whereas, to try and see him, unless he manifested a desire to see us, would seem like intrusion. He sat in his cabin, we heard, all day, and at night, when it was dark, walked upon the quarter-deck. He spoke with no one save the First Lieutenant, and made no reference to the approaching trial—the day for which they expected would be fixed very shortly.

First, however, my father wrote to him, and asked if he would wish to see him; but received a letter thanking him, indeed, and putting off his visit until, the writer said, he should be forced to contemplate the near approach of Death. Next, Mr. Brinjes sent a message that he wished to see him as his physician (a title which he assumed when he pleased); but the Captain returned word that he had never been in better health.

As for myself, I waited for some days, not venturing to intrude upon his suffering, yet desirous of seeing him. At last I wrote a letter, begging him to tell me if I could do anything for him. To which he replied that he would take it kindly if I would come aboard and see him in his cabin. I obeyed with a sinking heart, for, indeed, what consolation could I administer, or with what countenance could I greet him, or could I pretend that he was not overwhelmed with shame?

When I went on board, I was astonished to find, acting as sentry at the top of the companion, no other than Aaron Fletcher. I knew not that he was on board the 'Calypso.' Strange, indeed, that he should now be mounting guard as Marine over the man whom he had many times fought, and twice tried to murder. He made no sign of recognition as I passed him.

Jack was in his cabin, sitting at his window, leaning his head upon his hand, and gazing upon the river, with the crowd of craft

upon it. He turned his head when I opened the door, and rose to meet me.

'Luke,' he said, 'canst take the hand of a coward wretch who hath surrendered his ship without a blow? Nay—nay—lad; tears will not help, and I am not worth a tear, or anything now but to be shot like a cur, and rolled up in a bit of sacking, and so tossed into the water, and forgotten.'

I asked after his health, but he put me off.

'Health?' he cried. 'What matters my health? If you can pick up a small-pox, or a galloping consumption, or a fever, and send it to me—the worse the complaint, the better I shall like it; or if Mr. Brinjes, who can cause all diseases, will send me one that will suddenly tear out my heart, or stop my breath, it would be very much to the point at the present juncture. My health? Why, as the Devil will have it, it was never better.' He laughed. 'Go tell Mr. Brinjes, or his swivel-eyed assistant, to make me up a disease or two in that saucepan of his that is always on the hob. 'Tis a crafty old man, and first cousin, I verily believe, to the Devil.'

He paused awhile, thinking what next to tell me.

'Tell the Admiral . . . No, not yet; after my death thou shalt tell him all the truth, which I will tell thee directly. I cannot write to that good old man; yet, Luke, I must send him some message. Therefore . . . . but no, there are no words that I can send him. I cannot ask his forgiveness, because he can never forgive me. I cannot thank him for all his kindness, because I am not worthy now so much as to send a word of gratitude. Let be, let be. When I am dead thou shalt tell him the truth. As for Castilla, she must forget me. Tell her that, Luke. I am certain that she will soon console herself. She never loved me as poor Bess used to love me. There is Mr. Brinjes—tell him—why, tell him that he must look for another sailor to steer his ship among the islands of the Southern Seas.'

'Jack,' I said, 'it is terrible.'

'Yes; it is terrible. It is very terrible, lad. But it must be endured. Trust me, that I shall not stand snivelling before the file of Marines at the end. That is, unless there be another——' Here he paused, and in his eyes there was apparent a look of such terror as I have never since seen in any man's eyes, while his cheeks turned white, and drops stood upon his brow. 'Unless,' he said again, 'there come another——' Here he broke off again. 'Luke,' he said, 'if at the end I die craven, know of a surety that I die unforgiven, and that my soul is lost. But it cannot be that death will not atone.' So he paced his cabin once or twice, and then, becoming more calm, he sat down again. 'Luke, dear lad, I wished to see thee, but only thee, for the present. I have much to say. And first—of Bess. Do you know the words she said to me before I sailed?'

'I know them. Bess told me herself.'

'Does any other person know them?'

'No one, I believe.'

'Let her hold her tongue, then, lest they take her for a witch. Why, I know full well that she is no witch; and as for those words, they were spoken by her, but yet were not her own. I laughed when I heard them. The second time I heard them I laughed no longer. And now I will tell thee the whole truth, Luke; but keep it to thyself until I am dead, when I wish thee—nay, I charge thee—to tell the Admiral and thy father. I crowded all sail in pursuit of the enemy; I prepared for action with as light a heart as a man can have who has a stout ship and a lusty crew. My guns they were loaded, and my men were at quarters, every man stripped to the skin, a good ration of rum served round, and as hearty a spirit as ever animated a British crew. I was as certain of making a prize of the "Malicieuse" as I am now certain of being tried and sentenced to death. Suddenly, we being by this time well within range, and our men prepared to give the enemy a broadside, a shot from the Frenchman struck our bow, and sent the splinters flying. Then there came upon me a kind of dizziness, and a voice shouted—yea, shouted in my ears—though none but me heard it. . . . "Thou shalt be struck where thou shalt feel the blow most deeply." I tell thee the truth, Luke. But tell no one, lest they seize poor Bess for a witch. Something—I know not what—caught my hand, and dragged me—whether I would or no—yea, compelled me—to the mainmast, and placed the halliards in my hand, and forced me to haul down the flag. I know not very well what happened afterwards; my men, I believe, were all smitten with stupid amazement, and made no resistance; how should they when their flag was struck? They tell me that I cut down the First Lieutenant. Thank God I did no more than stun him! And presently, when I came to myself, I was sitting on a carronade, and the ship was a prize, and the French Commander was on the quarter-deck.'

'But you recaptured the ship?'

'Why, 'twas a desperate attempt. I thought first that I would starve myself to death. But a man does not like to kill himself. And then, seeing the Frenchmen on the deck, and some of my lads for'ard under the sentries, I thought to make them kill me. Alas! they were not suffered to kill me. Some of my men were wounded, and a good many of the Frenchmen knocked o' the head; but I came out of the fight without a scratch, and the ship was ours again. That is my story, lad, in its truth.'

What could a man say in consolation to a man thus afflicted? Was there ever a worse case? My father, for his part, found the case of Job worse, 'because,' he said, 'not only did the Patriarch lose wife and children, and substance and health, but he also lost that which made the patriarchal life more desirable than any which hath followed it—namely, the daily walk with God, compared with which a man's reputation among his fellows is naught indeed.'

'Tell Bess,' Jack went on, 'what hath happened. Let her know that she is revenged, and I am punished. She did not desire my punishment. It will grieve the poor, tender creature, who always loved me better than I deserved. Yet it is the punishment—nay, I know it now—it is the punishment of GOD Himself.'

He then told me, what indeed I knew already, the history of his passion for Bess, which was as brief as it was violent, sparing himself not at all.

'Never,' he swore, 'was a man more madly in love with any woman than I with Bess, and never, I am sure, did woman love man better than she loves me. I confess, lad, that I made her a thousand promises the most sacred I knew, even upon the Holy Bible, that I would never forget her, but would marry her when I returned. The man Brinjes was witness a dozen times to these protestations. As for him, he is, I think, a devil. For he egged her on to meet me as often as I wished in his own house; and he laughed when I swore constancy, telling me, when she was not present, that I knew the lesson as well as if I were five-and-thirty, instead of four-and-twenty, and that every sailor was the same, but I the most fortunate of all, because I had so beautiful a girl. I meant not, however, Luke, to deceive her. I intended when I sailed away to keep my word. I was full of love to her. Yet, which is strange, when we had been at sea for two or three months, I thought of her no longer. When I came home with the prize I declare that I had clean forgotten her; and when I saw her, I looked upon her no longer with love, and wondered how I could ever have loved her.'

'Poor Bess!'

'It is strange, Luke, since I took the ship again, the image of the girl hath returned to my heart. I have thought upon her daily, and I remember once more all the things that passed between us while I was waiting for my appointment to the "Tartar." Poor Bess! She deserved a better lover. How could I ever forget her brave black eyes? See, Luke!' He drew up his sleeve and showed his left arm—he had forgotten when last he exhibited that tattoo. 'See, lad, her name is ever before me. Yes; a better lover she deserved.'

'She desires no better lover, Jack.'

'What?' he asked. 'Doth she not curse my very name?'

'Nay; she hath never cursed thee, Jack. She loves thee still: she hath always loved thee.'

'A woman cannot love a man who is disgraced.'

'Why? She loves the man: it is not his honour or his reputation she loves. That I have heard, but I have never understood it, concerning women, before; but now I perceive it very plainly. It is strange to us, because a man cannot love a woman without thinking of her beauty; and so we believe that a woman cannot love a man without thinking of his honour and reputation, his strength and his name. Jack, will you see this poor girl?—will you let her come to you?—and tell her kindly, in your old

way, that you love again, as in the past time, and so heal her bleeding heart?'

'See her? Truly, I never thought,' said Jack, 'that she would any more come to me. I thought that she must be like Aaron Fletcher, only anxious to see me swing. Why, if the poor child can find any comfort or happiness in coming here, let her come, in God's name. As for me, dear lad, there is a load upon my heart which I thought would be with me till my death. But if she will forgive me, I think that load will be removed, and I can die with easier mind. Poor Bess! she will but get her lover in time to see him die. My heart bleeds for her! Go quick—bring her to me. Let me at least ask her forgiveness.'

You may be sure that I lost no time in taking this fond message to Bess.

I looked that she would burst into weeping and sobbing. But she did not.

'I knew,' she said, 'that I should get my lover back. Now care I for nothing more. For if he must die, so must I die also. Death itself shall not have power—no—death shall have no power to separate us. On the day that he dies shall I die too. He loves me again. Why—do you think I care what may happen to either of us, since he loves me still?'

I led her on board, and took her to the Captain's cabin, but at the door I turned away, and so left them alone.

Oh! behind that closed door what prayers and vows were uttered! what tears were shed! what tender embraces were exchanged! when, in the presence of Shame and Death, those hapless lovers met again!

CHAPTER XLII.

OF THE COURT-MARTIAL.

NEARLY all that follows is matter of history, and may be read in the gazettes and papers of the day. Yet, for the sake of completing the history, it shall be set forth in order.

The court-martial was appointed to be held on board the 'Calypso,' on the forenoon of Monday, February 2.

On that day it was accordingly held, the Hon. John Cheveril, Rear-Admiral of the White and Admiral of the Port, being the President. The Court consisted of Captains Richard Orde, Frederick Drake, Saltren Willett, Peter Denis, and Joshua Rowley. Captain Petherick should also have sat, but he begged to be excused, on the ground of personal friendship with the defendant. He was present, however, and sat at the back of the court, with as sad a countenance as ever I beheld. (As for our Admiral, he was in his bedroom with an attack of the gout, which even Mr. Brinjes could not cure.) The court was thrown open to all. Few of the friends of the accused officer were present, but there was a great throng of

people, not only from Deptford Town, but also from London. Truly, a court-martial, on whose decision rests the honour, if not the life, of a man, is a species of judicial investigation which strikes awe upon the beholder, even more than the aspect of the judge, jury, and counsel in a civil court, the solemnity of the occasion being heightened and set off by the uniforms of the Judges and the naked weapons of the sentries and guards.

The Court was opened by the Deputy Judge-Advocate. He was only an attorney of Deptford, by name Richard Pendlebury, but he wore a black gown over his coat, and, being provided with a full wig, which might have been proper even to a serjeant-at-law, and wearing much lace to his bosom and his sleeves, and being a big burly gentleman with a full round voice, he looked as full of authority as a King's Counsel. He began the proceedings by reading the warrant of the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, empowering the Admiral to assemble courts-martial. This done, the President ordered that Captain Easterbrook should be brought before the Court. My heart beat fast and my throat choked when he appeared, bearing himself proudly, but with pale cheek, dressed, if one may say so, like a bride for her wedding, wearing his best uniform, his richest lace, and white leather gloves. Never, surely, did officer of the King's Navy bear himself more gallantly. Once only I saw his cheek flush scarlet. 'Twas when, in the old familiar way, he clapped his hand to his side for the adjustment of his sword. Alas! he had no sword. That had been taken from him, and was now lying on the table before the President, the hilt towards the prisoner. Then he bowed to his judges and stood upright, and, to outward show, calm and collected, though a tempest of shame and despair was raging within.

Then the Deputy Judge-Advocate administered the oath to the members of the Court and took it himself in the form prescribed, after which he read the charge against the defendant, as follows:

'Gentlemen,—The charge against Captain John Easterbrook, Commander of the "Calypso," here present before your honourable Court, is that on the 4th day of December, 1759, he did cowardly and treacherously surrender and yield up his ship to the enemy, and he is here to answer this charge accordingly.'

He then read the Fifteenth of the Articles of War, as follows:

'Every person in or belonging to the fleet who shall desert to the enemy, pirate, or rebel, or shall run away with any of His Majesty's ships or vessels of war, or any ordnance, ammunition, stores, or provision belonging thereto, to the weakening of the service, or shall yield up the same, cowardly or treacherously, to the enemy, pirate, or rebel, being convicted of any such offence by the sentence of the court-martial, shall suffer death.'

These preliminaries being completed, the Deputy Judge-Advocate proceeded to call his witnesses, and to each in turn administered an oath which is more awful than that used in the civil courts, because it lays upon the witness an obligation to reveal

everything that he knows concerning the case. The form is this:

'I, A. B., do most solemnly swear that in the evidence I shall give before the Court respecting the present trial I will, whether demanded of me by question or not, and whether favourable or unfavourable to the prisoner, declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So help me, GOD!'

The deposition of the officers had already been taken at Portsmouth for the information of the Lords Commissioners, and in every case these were first read aloud, and then confirmed by the witness, who added what he chose, and answered such questions as were put to him. And in the putting of these questions it seemed to me as if the Deputy Judge-Advocate was desirous of pressing and dwelling upon every fact which might make the crime appear blacker, and of concealing or passing over every fact which made in favour of the accused.

The first witness called was Lieutenant Colin Macdonald, First Lieutenant of the 'Calypso.'

His deposition was short, and was as follows:

'At daybreak on the morning of December the 4th, being then in company with the frigate "Resolute," Captain Boys, we sighted three ships, which we presently made out to be a squadron of three French frigates, apparently of about the same armament as ourselves. They bore away at sight of us, as not wishing to fight. Captain Easterbrook gave the word to crowd all sail and up hammocks, the wind being then fresh and nearly aft and the sea lively, but the ship sailing free and not lying down, so that all her ports could be opened and all her guns fired. We presently found that we gained upon the Frenchmen, and about noon we were nearly come up with the "Malicieuse," the slowest of the three, the "Resolute" being then half a mile or so astern, and the other two French ships about as much ahead of us. We were by this time cleared for action, the men at their quarters, and everything reported in readiness, looking for nothing but a close engagement, and a pretty hot one, with the three ships. The Captain's plan, he told me, was to range alongside of the enemy, pour in his broadside, grapple, and board, thinking that the "Resolute" would do the like, and so we might capture the squadron. And this we could have done, having faster vessels than the enemy, and Captain Easterbrook being, as I take it, the smartest handler of a ship in the service, though so young a man. But the Frenchman was not disposed to allow of this, if he could help it. Therefore, he began to let fly with the stern-chasers, being, like most of his nation, amply provided with these helps to running away. His first shot knocked away part of our figure-head, the splinters flying about the deck; but no one harmed. Just then, to our utmost consternation, the Captain turned pale, and ran to the mainmast, where, with his own hands, he began to lower the colours. I ran to him, crying, "Captain, for God's sake, consider what you are doing!" Where-

upon he drew his sword, and cut me down over the head, but, fortunately, with the flat of the weapon only, else I had been a dead man. And I knew no more until the business was ended, and we were all prisoners.'

Being asked by the Deputy Judge-Advocate what preparations had been made for an engagement, he replied that nothing was omitted that is customary on such an occasion; that they had ample time during the chase, and that no ship ever went into action better prepared. Immediately on sighting the enemy the bo's'n and his mates piped to stow hammocks; the carpenter and his mates were ready with their mauls and plugs; the gunner and his quarter-gunners examined and reported on all the cannon. When the ship was within a mile of the enemy the drum beat to quarters. Then every man stripped to the waist, and repaired to his proper place; a ration of rum was served out; the hatches were laid; the Marines were drawn up on the quarter-deck and fo'ks'le; lastly, the guns were cast loose, the tompions withdrawn, and the guns loaded and run out at all the ports. In one word, there was no point omitted that a Commander who knows his business would neglect, and everything in such order as the most resolute Captain could desire.

Being asked further, if the enemy's consorts showed an intention of taking part in the fight, the Lieutenant replied that he was not prepared to state positively, but he believed that one of them backed her sails, while the other appeared to be hauling her wind; but he repeated that it was the Captain's design to neglect these vessels while he took the 'Malicieuse' by boarding, and afterwards to engage her consorts with the help of the 'Resolute.'

Being further pressed upon the distance of the 'Calypso' from the 'Malicieuse' when the Captain surrendered, he replied that, to the best of his knowledge and belief, the 'Calypso' was no more than a hundred and fifty yards astern of the 'Malicieuse,' and gaining rapidly. Being asked what was the posture of the enemy so far as could be discerned, he replied the men were at quarters, and ready for action, but that all sail was crowded, and that the Frenchman, it was quite certain, had no stomach for the fight, and would gladly have got clear off.

At this point of the evidence, Captain Easterbrook was asked if he had any questions to put to the witness. He replied that he had none, and that to the best of his knowledge the evidence given by Lieutenant Macdonald was true in every particular—a statement which made the Court look serious, and troubled the mind of the Deputy Judge-Advocate, because there is nothing which these gentlemen desire more than to fight a stubborn case; whereas, if an officer pleads guilty, and throws himself upon the mercy of the Court, he has no chance to show his cleverness.

'With permission of the Court,' said the First Lieutenant, 'I will now give evidence as to the recapture of the ship.'

'I submit to the Court,' said the Deputy Judge-Advocate, 'that

the recapture of the ship has nothing to do with the charge against Captain Easterbrook—namely, that he did cowardly and treacherously yield up his vessel.'

'Gentlemen,' said the Lieutenant, 'with respect. If the ship had not been recaptured the Court could not have been held. And if it had not been for the Captain the ship would never have been recaptured. For he did a thing which I venture to maintain no other man in the service would have done, when he engaged, single-handed, the whole of the crew in charge of the prize.'

So the Court conferred together, whispering, and the President ordered the witness to proceed. Whereupon the Deputy Judge-Advocate sat down and put his hands in his pockets, and gazed upwards as if this part of the evidence did not concern him.

The account which the Lieutenant gave of the retaking of the ship was exactly the same which he had already given to the Commissioner of the Yard, Captain Petherick. It need not, therefore, be repeated here. Suffice it to say that at the recital there was not a face in court which was not suffused with emotion, and as for myself, I thought that surely after so gallant an exploit his sword would be returned to him.

'Gentlemen,' concluded the First Lieutenant, 'twas the most gallant deed I have ever witnessed. Only by a miracle, and by his own valour, did the Captain escape death. There were on deck thirty Frenchmen, all armed, and he with nothing but the sword which he tore from the French Commander. And to back him only a dozen unarmed men, who, to tell the truth, for I was among them, were taken by surprise, and would never have plucked up heart save for the example of the Captain. The first man to join him was a Marine, named Aaron Fletcher, who seized a rammer, and, armed with this weapon alone, stood by the Captain, playing a man's part, indeed; but for him, the Captain would have been cut down a dozen times. But, gentlemen, that the ship was recaptured is due to nobody but to the desperate valour of the Captain himself.'

The Court asked Captain Easterbrook whether he had any questions to put on this head, but he had none. Wherefore, Lieutenant Macdonald stepped aside, and made way for the next witness.

Then the Second Lieutenant of the ship was called, and he gave evidence that he was at his station on the main deck when the action began, and testified to the disgust of the men when they learned that the ship was surrendered. This was the more astonishing to them, as their Captain had the reputation of uncommon courage. At first the men refused to believe that the vessel was surrendered, and called upon each other to fight it out.

The Third Lieutenant gave similar evidence, adding that, had not the men been fully convinced of the Captain's bravery and judgment, there would have been a mutiny on board; and that they thought the ship must be sinking at least, or dangerously on fire, or that it was some stratagem, counterfeit, or design by which the

Captain thought to fool the enemy, and that they looked at each other and laughed aloud, waiting for the word to lay the guns, and fire. Further, that the enemy did not believe it possible that a British ship should thus cowardly be yielded up, and continued to fire upon the 'Calypso,' the shot passing through the rigging and the sails, but doing no further mischief. Nor did the men believe that the ship was surrendered until the French boat came alongside and the Captain gave the word to back the sails and lay down arms, which they all did with a very bad grace, yet still persuaded that something fatal had happened to the ship, and that the colours were struck to save their lives.

The Lieutenant of Marines deposed that his men were drawn up in readiness on the quarter-deck and fo'ks'le, and stated plainly that he had no doubt of the issue, because the Frenchmen had only one thought—namely, to get away; and, in his opinion, it had been the Captain's intention to attack and take all three ships, with the help of the 'Resolute'; and that nothing in the world had ever surprised him more than the strange behaviour of the Captain, from whom so much had been expected.

Captain Easterbrook declined to ask any questions of these witnesses. Was he, then, going to make no attempt at a defence?

They called the Purser, who put in the Captain's log-book, which is always done on these trials, I am told, but I know not why. And then I thought we should surely proceed to the defence, because there could be no doubt of the main fact—namely, that the Captain had certainly struck the colours.

But they delayed the case in order to call the Master, who confirmed the First Lieutenant's evidence as to the preparations for engaging the enemy; and the Gunner, who also confirmed the evidence; and the bo's'n and the carpenter, who added little to the evidence already before the Court, except the fact that when the men were under hatches and knew what had been done, the swearing and cursing of the crew were strong enough to lift the decks.

'Gentlemen,' said the Deputy Judge-Advocate, 'there is no other evidence before the Court.'

'Stay,' said the President, 'call the Marine of whose conduct in the recapture of the ship Lieutenant Macdonald hath spoken.'

So they called Aaron Fletcher.

When this witness stepped forward, looking, it must be confessed, a much smarter and finer man in his scarlet coat than he ever looked as a landsman, Jack's face flushed. It was his fate never to be out of reach of this man's animosity. Twice had Aaron tried to take his life, when that was most worth having. Once he had saved his life when he himself had most ardently desired to lose it. Now he was present to give evidence in the hour of his open humiliation.

'I thought,' he told me afterwards, 'that I had drained the whole cup. But the bitterest drop was when that man stood before me, as if Bess, poor girl! had not yet forgiven me, and had sent

her old lover to gloat over my discomfiture. She hath forgiven me, however; therefore I need not have been troubled.'

The Court ordered the man to be sworn, and bade him relate all that he knew concerning the affair, and particularly as to the retaking of the ship from the French.

'I was on the fo'ks'le,' said Aaron, speaking boldly, and no whit abashed at the solemnity of the Court and the rank of the Judges. 'I was on the fo'ks'le, with the rest of the company drawn up and armed, the muskets being loaded and inspected, waiting for the word to fire, which would have been in a few minutes, as we expected. Then a shot from the enemy struck our bows and the wood went flying; but no one, that I could see, was hurt. And then I saw the Captain strike the flag and cut down the First Lieutenant. "Mates," I whispered presently, "either the ship is sinking, or the Captain has lost his stomach for the fight. If she sinks, we go to Davy's Locker; if he's played the coward, he will swing." ' As he said these words, he turned his face to Jack with a look of triumph in his eyes. 'We were all sent down below,' he continued, 'when the Frenchmen came aboard, and there we stayed with no arms and short rations. Two days afterwards I was on deck, taking my spell of fresh air with the others—about a dozen men in all. We were leaning against the bulwarks, wishing the job was over, and cursing the Captain, who was sitting on the quarter-deck on the trunnions of a carronade, his hands on his knees, staring straight before him as if he saw the rope dangling before his eyes, already noosed for him. Suddenly I saw him spring from his place and catch the French officer, who was walking the deck, by the throat, and shake him like a dog. Then he threw him on the deck (where the Frenchman lay stunned and half-dead) and he tore his sword from him; then he rushed upon one of the sentries and cut him down, and attacked the other: some of the Frenchmen, seeing what was done, cried out in their own lingo, and ran aft, some firing pistols and some drawing cutlasses. Whereupon I called out to my mates and seized a rammer, which was the best thing for a weapon I could come at, and ran after them, and so to the Captain's side, for I plainly saw that his design was to kill as many of the Frenchmen as he could, and to be killed himself, which I resolved to prevent if I could. And then the other Englishmen joined me, and in a very few minutes we had half of the prize crew killed or wounded, and the other half crying for quarter; but the Captain was so furious that for some time he would give none, throwing himself upon all such as had weapons and would fight. Hard work I had to save him. But I did. When 'twas all over there wasn't a scratch upon him. I saved him, your Honours. With a rammer I saved his life.'

'Your courage,' said the President, 'does you credit. I shall take care that it is duly represented to the Colonel of your regiment; and if your conduct is reported as equal to your gallantry, you will not go without your reward. The Captain, you think, sought for death?'

'No one,' said Aaron, 'who did not want to be killed could have behaved as he did. Before the enemy called for quarter, we had driven them together in the waist, where they were shouting and threatening to charge us with pikes and bayonets, but we had weapons by this time, and were ready to receive them. But they did not charge, because the Captain leaped into the middle of them with nothing but his sword in his hand, laying about him like a madman. He was sober and in his senses when he cowardly hauled down the flag, but he was now, when he attacked the prize crew, gone stark mad. If he hadn't been mad and not known what he was about, we should never have taken the ship.'

'And you leaped after him?' asked one of the Court.

'I had my rammer, which was almost as good as a quarter-staff; and I'd rather have a quarterstaff than a sword any day, or a pike either, if there's room for play.'

'And this you did out of devotion or loyalty to your Captain?' asked the President, astonished at the man's coolness, and the deliberation with which he gave his evidence.

'Nay, nay,' he replied, grinning again, 'I saved his life because I should have been sorry to see him die like a brave man. All I wanted was to see him swing, your Honours, for striking his colours.'

These words produced a sensation in the court; and all eyes were turned upon this witness who (though but a simple Marine) carried devotion to his country's honour unto so great a height. But the officers of the 'Calypso' whispered together, and I heard such words passed from one to the other as 'rascal,' 'six dozen,' 'the first chance,' 'not good enough for him,' and so forth, from which I conjectured that Aaron would find a warm welcome if he went to sea again on board this vessel. I think he must have heard the whispers, but he cared nothing for them. He was now enjoying a revenge sweeter far than to have murdered the Captain with his own hand.

Therefore, he turned his ugly face to the prisoner, and grinned with the satisfaction of his ignoble triumph. The Court, however, seemed to take the words for an outburst of honest and patriotic feeling which did credit to this rough and simple fellow.

Captain Easterbrook refused to ask any questions of this witness either. It was now between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, when the President asked the prisoner if he designed to call any witnesses for the defence, and proposed to adjourn the Court until the following day.

'Sir,' said Jack, 'I have no witnesses to call.'

'Then,' said the President, 'you would doubtless wish for time to prepare your defence. It is now late; we will adjourn the Court until to-morrow.'

'Sir,' said Jack, 'I thank you. But, with permission of the Court, I will make my defence without further delay. I will not trouble the Court to adjourn.'

The Court conferred, and presently said that they would hear the prisoner at once, if he chose.

'Gentlemen,' Jack began, 'I have but a few words to say; and as for defence, I have none. I have been at sea since my thirteenth year, and am now four-and-twenty. During this time I have been present in many actions, and I have never received aught but commendation from my superior officers. I served first under Captain Holmes, of the "Lennox," and next on board the "Countess of Dorset," when I was cast away on the coast of Patagonia, and, after wandering among the Indians, I was prisoner first to the Spaniards, and afterwards to the French. But I broke prison, and was appointed Third Lieutenant to Captain Lockhart, of the "Tartar." I submit that my character for courage was never impugned on board any of these vessels, and Captain Lockhart hath thought fit to bear testimony in his despatches to my conduct in the many engagements fought by his ship. You have also heard how I was enabled, by the help of those of my crew then on deck, to take the ship again.'

He paused here, as if he was unwilling to say what was in his mind.

'I submit to the Court,' said the Deputy Judge-Advocate, 'that these facts, which I think the Court will not dispute, do not constitute any defence.'

'They are no defence,' Jack replied. 'I state them because they form my only consolation in this hour. I have no defence. The charge is true. My officers and crew would have taken, not only the "Malicieuse," but the two other ships as well. Their evidence is true in every particular. I wish to testify that no Commander ever had better officers, a handier vessel, or a heartier crew. I threw all away. I struck the colours. I cowardly and treacherously surrendered my ship without firing a shot. I have but one prayer to make of the Court. It is that this act, which was wholly my own, may not in the least degree prejudice the future of my brave Lieutenants. It was this shameful hand, and none other, which hauled down the flag of the "Calypso."'

When he concluded, there was silence for a space, because the Court and everybody present were taken by surprise, and because the contemplation of this tall and handsome lad (he seemed no more) thus avowing, not proudly, but shamefully, and yet honestly and fully, his own dishonour, overwhelmed us with sadness. From his officers, standing together, there were whispers, which could be heard all over the court: 'He was mad. A madman is not answerable for his doings. No one but a madman would have done it.' And so forth. And I verily believe, and have been assured, that there was not one among them all who would not gladly have put out to sea again under Captain Easterbrook, in full confidence that he would fight the ship as long as a man was left alive to stand beside him.

As for me, I had looked to see him call some witnesses. He could not, it is true, call Bess Westmoreland; nor could he tell the

whole truth, else he would have stood before the Court and said, 'Gentlemen, this is none other than the Hand of GOD which hath struck me for my sins, and because I broke my solemn oath, passed to a woman. *The Hand hath struck me in that way which most deeply and most bitterly I should feel.* For I never feared to die, nor to be wounded, but always and before all things have I loved and prized honour and been jealous for my good name, and longed to distinguish myself and to rise in the service. Wherefore, now have I been deprived of the thing which most of all I prized, and stand before you all, bereft of honour, a *cowardly* Commander, so that there remains for me nothing but death; and whether I am hanged or shot, I care not, so that I may die soon. For there is no place where I could live whither my shame would not also follow me and be quickly brazened forth to all the folk. Sentence me, therefore, quickly, and let me go.'

This, I say, he felt and knew to be the truth. Yet he would not say it. But he might have called Mr. Brinjes, who would have testified, which is the truth, though it did not perhaps touch the case, that men who have been in places where the sun is hot, especially such as have wandered about without any covering for their heads, are often subject to sudden fits of madness, during which they know not what they do; and that perhaps this was the case with Captain Easterbrook. Nay, I have heard learned physicians, disputing on such points, argue that sudden fits of madness are often produced by exposure to the hot sun; so that a man who hath once received a sun-stroke, as they call it, may, in such an access, commit murder or any other crime, and not know afterwards what he hath done.

The case being then concluded and the whole evidence completed, with such defence as the defendant had thought fit to set up, order was given to clear the court, which was done, the guard of Marines taking the Captain back to his cabin, and the Judges being left alone.

'He will die,' said Captain Petherick; 'I see in his eyes that there is nothing left for him to desire but death. The day of his execution will be welcome to him. Yet I hope that they will not hang him like a cur, but will shoot him like a brave man.'

'He was certainly mad,' said Mr. Shelvocke. 'I remember once, being then off the Ladrone Islands——'

'Ay,' said Mr. Brinjes, interrupting—I had not seen him in court; yet he was there, dressed as if for the Club—'Ay. The boy was mad. What? Would a coward have resolved upon so desperate an enterprise as to attack the prize crew single-handed? Death was before him—death if he failed; death if he succeeded; for to succeed was but to throw himself into a court-martial. Whereas, if he had suffered the ship to sail into Brest Harbour, he might have lived in France all his life in safety, and no one to know what had happened. Now, what can they do but sentence him to be hanged or shot? Luke, my lad, if I had Aaron ashore,

I would make everyone of his teeth like a lump of red-hot iron; rheumatic pains should grind his joints and twist his nerves; gout should tear and rend his stomach; tic should stick sharp teeth into his face. Well—patience! something will happen unto Aaron yet. If, now, the poor boy had been suffered to have his wish, he would have died in the moment of victory, when he had reconquered the ship. As for witchcraft'—here he whispered—'but that I know the poor wretch loves him still, and would rather die than suffer him to come to any harm, I should believe that Bess was at the bottom of the mischief. I say not that she is a witch; but no one knows what a revengeful woman can do when once she dabbles in the forbidden art.'

Bess was, indeed, at the bottom of the mischief, but in a way which Mr. Brinjes could not understand; for he had not, so far as I could discover, the fear of the Lord before his eyes, and was, indeed, little better than a Pagan.

'There is again,' he said, 'the old black woman. But, then, Jack was to marry her mistress, and therefore she would not harm him. Yet there must be a girl in it, and she must have put Obi upon him by the help of some, though I knew not that there were any other Obeah men in this country, besides myself. If I were younger, I would go to Portsmouth and find that woman, and then, Luke, my lad, she should be made to feel as if it had been better for her never to have been born.'

'Bess, at least, is no witch,' I said, for the fire of his one eye was so bright that I feared he might have fallen upon her, or, at least, compelled her to tell him the truth.

'This woman, whoever she may be, hath robbed the King's service of the most gallant officer. She hath deprived a lovely woman of her sweetheart; she hath covered us all with shame and confusion. Wherefore, may her flesh fall rotten from her bones! May——'

'Nay, Mr. Brinjes,' I said, 'when you find her you can curse her. Let not your curses loose upon an unknown woman.'

He stopped because at this moment a messenger came forth from the Court, and word passed that the armourer was sent for, and my heart sank like lead, and the women began to sob. It was too true. That petty officer presently came on deck and was passed within the court. And we heard the noise of his file. Alas! he was filing Jack's sword, and the end was now certain. To me the filing of the sword was like the cutting of the life-threads at once by the Fates, because—ah! Bess—Bess! how couldst thou survive thy lover?

Then the court was thrown open and the prisoner was taken back to hear his sentence. We learned afterwards that there was a difference of opinion among the Judges, some inclining to mercy on the ground of the Captain's conduct in recapturing the ship. But in the end the sterner counsels prevailed; and, indeed, the commander of a ship can on no grounds be pardoned for surrender.

ing to the enemy save in extremity. Suppose a man commits a forgery, is it any defence that before and after this act of wickedness he led a good and virtuous life? Suppose a boy picks a pocket, is it any defence that he is sorry, and would fain give back the purse and the money that was in it?

We went back to the court. Alas! if there had been any room for doubt before, there was none now, because the prisoner's sword was reversed, and lay upon the table the point towards the prisoner, which meant Death.

'Guilty,' whispered Mr. Brinjes, not looking at the sword. 'Death is written in their faces.' It was. And yet the brave officers who had already passed and signed the sentence of death, showed compassion in their faces.

As for me, I cannot even now, after nearly forty years have passed, think of that moment without the tears rising to my eyes. The court was crowded with fine ladies, who had come from London to see the trial. They thought, perhaps, to enjoy the spectacle of a gallant man brought to shame, but they could not without tears and sobbing look upon this poor fellow, tall and manly, brought forth to hear a sentence of death.

The President arose, and read the sentence in his hand, signed by every member of the Court.

'Captain John Easterbrook, the court-martial duly held upon you for the loss of his Majesty's ship the "Calypso," find that you did cowardly surrender your ship. The sentence of the Court is that on a day to be presently appointed, according to the will of his Gracious Majesty the King, you be placed upon the quarter-deck of the "Calypso" and be there shot to death. God save the King!'

Now, before he spoke the last words, he laid down the paper and took Jack's sword in his hands, which he held for a moment as if loth to complete the sentence. Then, with the words, 'God save the King,' he broke the sword—filed in readiness by the armourer—across his knee and threw the broken pieces upon the table. And the women shricked and the men groaned, and the officers who composed the Court hung their heads as if they dare not face the prisoner. And yet their sentence was most just and righteous.

'Gentlemen,' said Jack, in a clear firm voice, 'I thank the Court for their patient hearing of the case. I looked for no other verdict, and I desire no other. I acknowledge the justice of the sentence. God save the King!'

CHAPTER XLIII.

AFTER THE COURT-MARTIAL.

THUS ended the court-martial; thus was made grievous shipwreck of a gallant youth's ambition, his honour, and his life; yet, as to his honour, 'twas stoutly and steadfastly maintained by all sailors, and especially by the officers and men of the 'Calypso,' that the Captain's surrender (being done in a moment of madness or by power of witchcraft) was fully atoned for by his surprising recapture of the ship. That, too, has always been the opinion of his friends, though, for my own part, as the only one left who knows the whole truth, I cannot but acknowledge that the madness was sent by Heaven, just as much as that madness which the ancients feigned to have been inflicted on the Greek hero who slew cattle and sheep, thinking they were his enemies. Therefore, no atonement for his deed was necessary, seeing that it was itself a punishment inflicted by the hand of a justly offended Creator.

I know not who told the truth to the Admiral, but perhaps it was Mr. Brinjes, who went daily to see him on account of an attack of gout, brought on partly by his distress of mind and the shame of this untoward event, and partly by the fault of the poor old gentleman himself, who tried to drown care with port wine and punch. This attack obstinately resisted the Apothecary's remedies. Indeed, though for the time he presently recovered, yet he came no more to the Sir John Falstaff, and never held up his head again, going in great heaviness, and, I fear, still taking more drink than is good for any man, until the disease mounted to his stomach, where, Mr. Brinjes being no longer at hand to assuage the pain, it speedily made an end of him.

On the evening of the court-martial the gentlemen of the Club met as usual, though without their President. The conversation was enlivened, if one may say so, by the extraordinary and tragical incidents of the day. They drank not less, but rather more, in order to sustain their spirits; they took their liquor with whispers, and lowered voice, as is done in a house where one lies dead; and they naturally talked much on subjects akin to what was in their thoughts, as if seeking consolation in recalling examples resembling the case which so much touched their hearts. Thus King Richard the Second is represented by Shakspeare as loving, when in captivity, to talk of the violent deaths of Princes.

'I was present,' said Captain Petherick, 'at the execution of Admiral Byng, two years and a half ago. If family influence could have availed, he would have been spared. Yet he was shot, and went to his death with a smiling countenance.'

'I remember,' said Mr. Shelvocke—but I know not whether this was true—'the death of Captain Kirkby and Captain Wade

for cowardly deserting Admiral Benbow, and that was fifty-seven years ago.'

Another recalled the well-known case of Lieutenant Baker Philips, shot in 1745, for surrendering the 'Anglesea' to the 'Apollon,' after the Captain and the First Lieutenant were both killed. No mercy was shown to him, though it was proved that he had but 200 men and forty guns (and of his crew fifty killed and wounded), against the French crew of 500 men with fifty guns. Yet they shot him at Spithead on board the 'Princess Royal.' As for other courts-martial, Captain Fox, of the 'Kent,' was dismissed his ship for neglect on duty in 1747. In 1744 Admiral Mathers and four Captains were cashiered for neglect of duty. In the same year the Master of the 'Northumberland,' the Captain being mortally wounded, surrendered the ship before the Lieutenant could get on deck. Wherefore, he was sentenced to be confined in the Marshalsea for the remainder of his life. 'And there, gentlemen,' said Mr. Underhill, 'he lies to this day, and but last Monday se'nnight I saw him, and conversed with him—a poor broken man, who vainly prays for death.'

In short, the talk ran wholly upon trials and executions; the unhappy young man now lying under sentence of death was, so to speak, executed beforehand and in imagination by his friends, who stood (for him) upon the quarter-deck, eyes bandaged, arms folded, before the file of Marines, and hoped (for him) nothing more than a happy shot through heart or head, which should put an instant stop to life. Then the conversation turned upon the various methods of violent deaths, all of which seem to be accompanied by great, and some by prolonged, agonies—such as breaking on the wheel, the punishment of the knout, or burning alive—and there was much discussion as to which method of violent death seemed the most preferable.

It was remarkable that Mr. Brinjes, generally one who talked more than any, for the most part sat apart during this gloomy talk, taking his pipe of tobacco without much share in the conversation, whether from excess of grief or from the callous disposition of old age, to which most things seem to matter little. But he muttered to himself, as old people use, without heed to those who are about them, and I overheard him.

'Ay . . . ay . . .' he said, 'the boy must be shot, I suppose, and then Bess will not live. . . . She will certainly live no longer when he is gone. So have I lost both. She will go drown herself as soon as the shots are fired. But he is not dead yet—while there is life there is hope—who knows what may happen? 'Twill be three, and perhaps six weeks before the day of execution. Much may be done in six weeks. The lad is not shot yet, nor is Bess drowned. And as for Aaron—but he saved the Captain's life. Wherefore, though he did it with an ill design, I harm him not.' Presently he recovered his spirits, and looked about him, and began to talk in a more cheerful strain, though how he could

put on a show of cheerfulness, with the prospect before him of Jack's certain execution and Bess's self-murder, passes understanding. 'The lad is not shot yet!' he said. Why, what could be done for him? Nothing. A reprieve was past praying for Yet it must be acknowledged that the popular indignation which had at first ran high against the Captain who thus cowardly surrendered, quickly subsided and changed into compassion when the circumstances of the recapture became known, so that perhaps a reprieve might not have been so impossible had there been any in high place to ask for it.

As regards the condemned man, whom I saw many times after the sentence, I declare that I have never known any man more cheerful and resigned to his fate than was this most unfortunate Captain during the three weeks which passed between his sentence and the day of his execution. Of hope, he had none; nor did he desire to live.

'If I were reprieved,' he said, 'whither should I go? how live? I am but twenty-four years of age, and I might live for fifty years to come, even into the next century, if the world endure so long, with the accursed remembrance of one day always in my mind, and among people who would never tire of pointing at the Captain who surrendered his ship without striking a blow—one single blow—the most cowardly surrender in the history of the British Navy. Why, 'twould be every day a thousand times worse than the pains of death. My worst enemy could devise no more cruel punishment than to send me forth free to walk the streets of an English town. Nay, Bess'—for she was with him—'tis idle to talk. I know what thou wouldst say, dear girl. For a mad act—we know, my dear, why that madness was sent, and for what cause permitted—no man should be held responsible. Why, my First Lieutenant was here yesterday, and said as much. But even he does not know, and the world can never know, the whole truth.'

In those last days Bess was with him always. She came at eight in the morning, and she left him at eight in the evening. Everybody knew by this time that she was the Captain's sweetheart; no one found it strange or wonderful, because Bess was the finest woman in Deptford, and the Captain was the comeliest man; and people only sometimes remembered that he had been reported as promised to the daughter of the Admiral. It astonished me, perhaps because I daily expected and feared it, that no one so much as hinted at the possibility of Bess being engaged in witchcraft, though all were agreed that by foul practices the Captain had been deprived for the moment of his courage. It is no longer the custom to burn witches; yet I am sure that if any woman had been discovered, or even suspected, by the good people of Deptford, to have been concerned in this wickedness, she would have suffered every torture they could have devised. Burning—mere burning—would have seemed too mild a punishment for a woman who could

thus by her villainous sorceries turn a brave man into a coward. Again, if things had gone well with this poor girl, if Jack had returned home triumphant and victorious, and had then openly sought his humble sweetheart, there were plenty of women who would have said hard and cruel things concerning her, as is their way with each other. But now, when her lover lay under sentence of death, they refrained their tongues; nay, they even said good things of her, reckoning it to her credit that, for the sake of the Captain, she would receive the addresses of no other man, and that she sent Aaron Fletcher about his business and consorted with none of her former friends (who were beneath the notice of a Captain's lady), and sought in the society of Mr. Brinjes to acquire the manners and the bearing of a gentlewoman. When she went down to the stairs in the morning, those women whom she passed on her way stood aside for her in silence, and looked after her with compassion in their eyes, and even with tears; and those, perhaps, the rudest women of the place, fit companions for the rudest sailors, abandoned in morals, sodden with drink, foul of tongue, and ever ready to strike and to swear. So that pity may find a home in the most savage breast.

She sat with Jack, therefore, all day long, in the cabin, which was his condemned cell. For the first day or two she wept continually. Then she ceased her crying altogether, and sat with dry eyes. She said nothing, but she looked upon her sweetheart always, as if hungering after the sight of his dear face. But from time to time she rose and flung out her arms, as if she could not bear herself. This was natural, when a woman regains her lover only to lose him by a violent death. One evening I walked home with her through the town, and she told me, poor girl! what was in her mind. 'I shall not live after him,' she said; 'of that I am resolved. Why, if it be as he says, that Heaven hath punished him for his inconstancy, was it not through my mouth that the punishment was pronounced? Where he goes, I shall go. When he dies, I shall die. In that same hour when the bullets tear his dear heart, shall I die too; and so my soul shall join his. I know not,' she said, wildly, 'oh! I know not whither we shall be sent in the next world; and I care nothing—no, nothing—so only that we go there together. I am quite sure that he is forgiven all his sins, if ever he committed any, though I know not that they can be worth considering. And he dies for them. What can a man do more? As for me, I am not afraid, because I have always gone to church every Sunday morning. Oh! I doubt not we shall go to Heaven together, and sit hand-in-hand, and side-by-side; and perhaps we shall forget the past, somehow, and then the old brave look will come back to my boy's eyes. What would Heaven be to him if I were not with him—and what to me if my Jack were not beside me? And oh! Luke, he loves me now more tenderly than ever he loved me before. And I am happy, though I know that we have

but a day or two more to live. They tell me that to be shot gives no pain. Else I could not bear it, and must die first.'

I pointed out to her the wickedness of self-destruction; but she would not listen, crying wildly that she cared for no wickedness—not she—so that she could join in death, as well in life, the man she loved. Surely there never was woman who loved man with so violent a passion; and now in these last days, when it was all too late, there never was girl more truly loved.

''Tis the fondest heart, Luke!' said Jack, the tears in his eyes. 'Why, for thy sake, sweet Bess, I would be almost contented to live, and to forget the past, if we could go somewhere together, where no man knew or could find out my dishonour—if we could go and live on one of the islands in the Southern Seas—— But this is idle talk.'

Then the time drew near when the sentence must be carried out. We expected from day to day to hear that the time was fixed.

About a fortnight after the sentence, a sudden and most surprising change came over Bess. She left off crying altogether; sometimes, even, she laughed; she seemed not to know, or even to care, what she said or did. She would throw herself into Jack's arms, and kiss him passionately; at the next moment she would tear herself free, and stand gasping and panting, and with wild eyes, as if with impatience; so that I feared lest she should lose her reason altogether. I have heard that persons condemned to the flames by the accursed Inquisition (which they dare to call holy) have been known to go mad with the terror of looking forward to that awful torture. Sure I am that no flames of the stake could be more dreadful to Bess than the thought of the moment when her lover would fall dead, pierced by a dozen bullets. Jack at such times would try to calm her, but she shook him off, crying, 'No—no. Let me be. Oh! I am choking. Oh! Jack—my dear—if you knew what is in my heart! Yes—Jack. I will be quiet. Oh! what a wretch am I that should add to your trouble at such a time!' Then she threw herself at his feet and caught his hands. 'Jack,' she cried, 'you know that I am your servant and your slave. Oh! if I loved you when all the world spoke well of you, think how much more I love you now you have got no one—oh! no one but your poor fond girl!'

He raised her and kissed her. Nothing now could move him but the sight of her tears and suffering, which (I am not ashamed to write this down) brought tears to my own eyes.

'Let us pretend,' she said, 'let us talk like children—oh! we were once happy children, and we could pretend and believe what we please. Why . . . all this is only pretence. The cabin is our old summer-house; you are only twelve years of age, and I am a little girl; and we have been playing at court-martial. . . . No,' she shuddered, 'that is a dreadful game. We will play at something else. We are going away—you and I together, Jack—we

shall take a ship and sail far away from England to the islands you have seen, and Mr. Brinjes talks about—we will live there—oh! no one will ever find us out. . . . We have long to live. I will work for you, and you will forget all that has happened. Then we shall grow old. . . . Do you think you would love an old woman, Jack, who had lost her beauty, and gone grey and toothless? And then we would lie down and die together. Why—whatever happens, we will die together—we must die together. Jack. . . . Jack. . . . Oh! if we could go away; oh! if we could go away together—to leave it all behind, and to forget it!'

'Patience, dear heart,' he said. 'Patience, Bess; it tears me to see thee suffer.'

I was with them; and—but who could see and listen to him without tears? I am not a stock or stone.

'Patience?' she replied. 'Yes, yes! I will have patience! Jack, do you remember three years ago, the day we were in the summer-house, Luke being present, you solemnly made a great promise?'

'I remember, Bess. God knows I have reason to remember, not only the promise but how I kept it.'

'Make me one more promise, Jack.' She laid her hands upon his arm. 'Make me one more promise now. Luke is here again to witness for us.'

'Why, child, what promise can I make thee now? A dying man can neither make or break a promise. Shall I promise to love thee in the next world?'

'Nay, promise what I shall tell thee. Say, after me: I, Jack Easterbrook——'

'I, Jack Easterbrook,' he repeated.

'Do swear solemnly, before GOD ALMIGHTY——'

He repeated these words.

'That I will grant to Bess Westmoreland one more request, whatever she may ask me, before I die.'

He said after her, concluding with the words—

'Whatever she may ask me, before I die.'

She fetched a great sigh and kissed him again; and, throwing her arms round his neck, laid her head upon his shoulder.

I could not, for the life of me, understand what she meant; and still I thought that her brain must be wandering with her troubles.

CHAPTER XLIV.

HOW BESS WENT AWAY.

It was only three weeks after the sentence that the condemned man received a summons to prepare himself for his execution, which was fixed for Monday, February the Twenty-third. This was a shorter

space between sentence and execution than was awarded to the unhappy Admiral Byng, who had eight weeks in which to prepare himself for death. However, Jack complained not, and received the announcement in a becoming spirit, and presently sent a letter to my father, who lost no time in visiting him, and continues daily to visit him until the day of execution.

Now, here I have to write down a strange thing, and one which is hardly to be credited. From the day of his trial (when, as I have said, the court was crowded with ladies) to the day before the execution, the ship was visited every day by ladies curious to see and, if possible, to converse with, this young and unfortunate officer. But he would not receive any. Nay, every day letters came to him, full of tender messages and of prayers, some of them entreating him to grant them an interview, some openly declaring their passion for him, some humbly asking for a lock of his hair, or a line in his handwriting, some begging him to observe secrecy in his replies, and some offering their services in high quarters to procure him a pardon or a reprieve. To none of these letters did Jack reply a word, but tore all up and threw the fragments from his cabin window. One day, however (it was after the day had been fixed for carrying out the sentence), there came on board a lady who would take no denial, but wrote down her name upon the back of a playing card and peremptorily ordered that it should be taken to the Captain's cabin. She was so quick, however, that she followed the messenger, and so forced her way in.

'My handsome Jack!' she cried, but stopped short, because she found another woman with him.

'Madam,' said Jack, rising, 'this is an unexpected honour.'

'I came, Captain,' she said, 'because we are old friends, and because I would fain help thee if I can.'

'No one can, Madam.'

'And because if I cannot, thou mayst still help me.'

'You may command me, Madam.'

'Nay,' she said, looking still at Bess, 'why so formal, Jack? 'Tis terrible to think that in a few days——'

'Madam, my time is short; pray remember that and be brief.'

'Why, Captain,' she laughed, ''twas but a little thing: and perhaps this lady will grant me five minutes alone——'

'It needs not,' said Jack; 'you can speak openly before her.'

'In that case it will be needless. Yet I will try. Captain, thou art condemned to die. 'Tis sad, indeed. Yet 'tis true. Now consider my case. I am deeply in debt. I have quarrelled with my Lord. Marry me, and so take my debts off my back. Nay, Madam'—for Bess sprang to her feet—'be pacified. 'Tis but an empty form that I ask. He shall marry me, and I will retire with the clergyman, and so he will free me at a stroke of all my debts.'

'Madam,' said Jack, before Bess could find time to speak, 'you are unfortunately too late. It is impossible that I could gratify

you in this request, because I am married already. This lady is my wife—my most unfortunate wife.'

'Oh, Madam!' said the actress, with a deep curtsey, 'I beg humbly to be forgiven! Believe me, I did not know. Well, Captain'—she heaved a sigh—'of all the men I have ever known thou hast gone nearest to make me think I have a heart. My poor Jack!' She seized his hand and kissed it. 'Oh, Madam'—she turned to Bess—'I thought not of this. I thought I should find him over a bowl of punch, drinking away his care. Alas! I remember you now. You loved him, and. . . . I remember you. . . . Poor child! Who shall comfort thee?'

So she stole away, weeping, and left them alone.

It was, indeed, true. The first service which Jack had asked of my father was to marry him to Bess Westmoreland. It was done secretly in the cabin, with no other witnesses than myself and the First Lieutenant, Mr. Colin Macdonald. So Bess got her heart's desire, and the old witch's prophecy proved true, that in the midst of troubles she should marry the man she loved. But what a marriage! After this my father, as I have said, visited him daily, and every morning asked the prayers of the congregation for one about to die.

Then, as day followed day, and there wanted but two or three more, Bess became still more strange in her manner, showing a restlessness and impatience so that she could no longer remain quiet for five minutes together, but must needs be pacing backwards and forwards, not crying or lamenting, but with burning face and eyes afire.

The sentence was to be carried out on the Monday morning. On Sunday, with a heart as heavy as lead, I prepared to say farewell.

I went on board about ten o'clock, at the time of morning prayers. Bess was already in the cabin, seated at the window, which was open, though the morning was cold, her face pressed against the bars. Jack was at the table, writing a letter for the Admiral.

'It is nearly finished, dear lad,' he said, looking up with a smile. 'Courage! The worst was over when the trial was done. To die would be nothing—but for leaving Bess. Be kind to her, Luke; be kind to her.'

I looked to see her burst into tears. But no—she listened without a tear or even a sob. 'This night, after I have parted with her, will be long, I fear. Your father hath comforted me greatly in the matter of religion, wherefore I have now a sure and certain hope, if I may humbly say so, though hitherto I have thought little of these matters. It is a blessed thing for thoughtless sailors that we have a Church to rule our faith, and forms of prayer to save our souls. He will come to-morrow, for the last prayers, before seven. At eight, the boats of the ships in port will surround the ship, the death-signal will be displayed, a gun will be fired, the crew will be

drawn up on the deck, and the prisoner will be brought out.' Bess listened without changing her countenance. Was she, then, turned into stone by sorrow, like Niobe?

I cannot write down the words with which he bade me farewell, nor my own. Suffice it that we took leave of each other with, on my side, all that a bleeding heart could find to say, and on his, with a message which I made haste to deliver to the Admiral, his patron and benefactor.

Then I left him alone with Bess.

It was arranged that they should part upon the hour when she must leave the ship and go ashore. He was peremptory that she must not try to see him in the morning, lest the sight of her might unman him. To stand upon the deck with eyes unbandaged, resolute and firm, was the only duty left for him to perform. Therefore Bess must part with him on Sunday night. She acquiesced, still without a single tear. But when the hour drew near, instead of hanging round his neck and weeping, she took both his hands in hers, and said—

'Jack—dear Jack—my own Jack!—you made me a promise the other day. The time hath come to keep it.'

'A promise, dear heart? Why, what can I do for thee now?'

'You would grant any request that I should make. The time hath now come.'

''Tis granted beforehand, dear girl.'

'My request, Jack, is, that you will live, and not die.'

'Bess?'

'That you will live, and not die. Listen! We have arranged everything for this evening. Mr. Brinjes hath managed all for us. See!' She whispered him very earnestly.

He gazed at her in a sort of stupefaction.

'We shall not stay in the country. A Dutch boat waits us off Barking Creek; the master, a boy, and yourself, will sail her across to Holland. If the wind is fair, we shall make a Dutch port in a day—oh! it is all arranged. We shall not stay in Holland, but take ship to the Dutch East Indies, and thence to the South Seas, where we will live—oh! my Jack—far, far away from the world; and I will work for thee. So we shall forget the past and Deptford, and—and—everything, and there will be a new life for us—oh! a new life, whether it be short or long, with no one to remind us of what hath happened. Oh! my poor tortured dear—it is through me—through me—that all this disgrace hath come upon thee; yes—and it shall be through me that thy life shall be saved!'

'Bess, I cannot! They would say that it was fitting that one who could cowardly strike the flag should also cowardly run away from punishment.'

'What matter what they say? Shall we care what they say, when we are sailing together among those islands? Will it touch our hearts any more to think of their praise, or blame?'

'Bess, I cannot!—oh! my tender heart, I cannot!'

'Then, Jack, thou SHALT. Thy promise is passed—a solemn promise before GOD. Wilt thou break that promise too, and go before Heaven, thy last act another broken pledge?'

Well, he fought awhile, and he yielded at length; and then she kissed him and went away; but she held her handkerchief to her eyes, so that those who saw her might not suspect.

At the head of the gangway, which, for the convenience of the court-martial, had been made into an accommodation-ladder, furnished with rails and side-ropes, stood Aaron Fletcher on guard.

'Thou art satisfied at last, Aaron?' said Bess.

'Not yet, but I shall be to-morrow,' he replied, whispering, because a sentry must not talk.

She said no more, but passed down the steps and into the boat.

In the afternoon, being in great distress of heart, I went to visit Mr. Brinjes. He was not sleeping, but was busied over a great number of small packages arranged in order upon the table.

'I have seen the last of him,' I said.

'Ay? Is Bess with him?'

'I am troubled about Bess. I think she hath gone distracted. For she weeps no more, and once I saw her laugh. She catches her breath, too, and is impatient.'

'For her distraction I will answer. I know a remedy for it, and that remedy she shall have. As for the catching of her breath, that too shall be cured; as for her impatience, I cannot help it, because it was impossible to complete the job before to-day.'

I asked him what he meant.

'Hath not Bess told you, then? Why, she was to have told you this morning before she broke the thing to Jack. 'Tis a good girl who can keep a secret. It is not true, mind ye, that no woman can keep a secret. Where their lovers are concerned, they can keep fifty thousand basketsful of secrets, and never spill so much as a single one.'

He began to open the packets, and to count their contents. They contained guineas, about fifty in each packet, and there seemed to be no end of them.

'This,' he said, 'comes of twenty years' honest industry. If a man takes in his shop six half-crowns a day and spends only one, in twenty years he shall be master, look you, of no less than four thousand pounds.'

Heavens! could he really be the owner of so great a property? When he had counted the money he dropped it into three or four leathern bags, which he tied to a belt below his waistcoat. 'Now,' said he, 'if we capsize, I shall go straight to Davy's Locker. Give me the skull-stick, my lad—so.' He looked at the horrid thing with admiration. 'I thought at first of giving it to Philadelphy, but now I will not, because she hath lied to me about the Great Secret, which I find she doth not, after all, possess. So much I suspected. She shall not have the Obeah stick. Besides, Heaven knows whither we are going, or what powers we may want;

therefore, I shall keep the stick.' He wrapped a cloth about the skull, and tied it up so that no one should know what it was. Then he laid it upon the table.

I observed then that everything was ready as if for departure. The shelves were empty; the fire was out; there were ashes of burnt paper in the grate; the famous charts were rolled up and lying on the table, beside the skull-stick. What did it mean?

'Why,' he said, 'since Bess hath not told you, I will not either. But—I think we can trust thee, Luke—surely we can trust thee, if anyone. Thou lovest Jack, I know, and Bess too, in thy mild and milky way. Why, a lad of spirit would have carried the girl off years ago, Jack, or no Jack. However—that is enough. My lad, we want thy help. There is no other that we can trust. It is life or death . . . life or death . . . life or death. Say that to thyself, and *forget not to be here at nine of the clock this evening.*'

'What is to be done at nine?'

'It is life or death, I say. Life or death! Now go; I have much to do. It is life or death. Two lives or two deaths. Life or death. Therefore, fail not.'

At nine o'clock I kept my appointment, wondering what would happen.

Bess was there, wrapped in a cloak and hood; in her hand she carried a small parcel. Mr. Brinjes was waiting, muffled and cloaked, his hat tied over his ears, and a roll—containing, I suppose, his charts and his famous skull-stick—under his arm.

'Come, lad,' he said, 'thou shalt know soon what it is we have to do.'

It was a dark and rainy night; the wind blew in gusts; the streets were deserted, save for some drunken fellow who rolled along, bawling as he went. Mr. Brinjes led the way towards the river, and we were presently at the Stairs, where the boats lay fastened to the rings by their long painters.

'Take the outside boat of all,' said the Apothecary; 'her oars are left in her on purpose. So, haul her to the Stairs. Step in, Bess. She is but a dingey, but she will serve. Luke, you have to row. You may shut your eyes, and keep them shut, if you like, for I shall steer.'

I began to suspect that something serious was to be attempted, but I obeyed without question or remonstrance.

'Twas then high tide, or a little on the ebb, so that at midnight the ebb would be at its strongest. I cast off the painter and shoved off. Then I took my seat and the oars, and rowed while Mr. Brinjes steered.

The river was rough and dark, save for the lights displayed by the ships. The 'Calypso' was moored very nearly off the mouth of the dock, but in mid-stream. Mr. Brinjes suffered me to row almost across the river, as if he were making for one of the Stairs on the other side. Then he put her head up stream, and steered so

that the boat approached the 'Calypso,' whose lights he knew, not as if we were boarding her, but as if we were making our way across her bows to the Dog-and-Duck Stairs of Redriff. The precaution was not necessary, perhaps, seeing how dark it was; but the eyes of sailors are sharper than those of landsmen; and the watch must not allow a boat to approach a ship without a challenge. We crossed the bows, therefore, of the 'Calypso,' I still rowing, and the boat apparently heading to the opposite shore.

But while we were still under the shadow, so to speak, of the great ship's bows, my coxswain whispered, 'Easy rowing—ship oars.'

I could not guess what he intended. 'Twas this.

The 'Calypso' lay pretty high out of water. The tide was running strong. Mr. Brinjes turned the boat's head and ran her straight under the side of the ship. He then, being as quick and skilful in the handling of a boat as any man sixty years younger, stepped into the bows, and with hand and boat-hook worked the boat along the side of the vessel to the stern, where he hooked on, and whispered that we must now wait.

'We have more than two hours still to wait. I think the watch will have no suspicion, and 'tis better to wait here an hour or two than to hurry at the end, and so perhaps be seen and the whole plot spoiled. Here we lie snug.'

We might be lying snug, but we lay more than commonly cold, and the wind and rain beat into one's face. Bess sat, however, with her hood thrown back, careless of cold or rain; and Mr. Brinjes lay muffled up in the bows. But in his hand he held the boat-hook.

The ship's bells and the town clocks and the Greenwich clocks made such a clashing in our ears every quarter of an hour, as kept us aware of the time—never before did I understand how slowly he crawleth. Why, there seemed to me an hour between each quarter, and a whole night between each hour.

When the clocks began to strike midnight Bess looked up and the old man threw off his cloak. 'Oars out,' he whispered. 'Gently. Don't splash. Here he is!'

We were immediately, though I knew it not, below the windows of Jack's cabin, which was the Captain's state-room. Below his window were those of the First and Second Lieutenants, and Mr. Brinjes had chosen the time of midnight, because then the watches would be changing, and these officers would be on deck or else fast asleep. It was as he expected. The end of a rope fell into the water close beside the boat, and then, hand under hand, our prisoner came swiftly down. In a moment he was sitting in the stern. Then Mr. Brinjes let go, and the tide, hurrying down the river as fast as a mill race, carried us noiselessly and swiftly away.

No one spoke; but Mr. Brinjes again took the ropes, and I began to row. We were very soon, keeping in mid stream, past Greenwich, and past Woolwich, I rowing as hard as I could, and the ebb-tide strong, so that we made very good way indeed.

Presently we came alongside a small vessel lying moored off Barking Creek, and Mr. Brinjes steered the boat alongside, and caught a rope.

'Now, Bess,' he said, 'quick; climb up.'

She caught hold of the cleats, and ran up the rude gangway as nimbly as any sailor. Mr. Brinjes followed.

Then Jack seized my hand, 'Farewell, dear lad,' he said, 'I thought not to see thee again. Farewell.'

So he followed, and left me alone in the boat.

'Sheer off, Luke,' said Mr. Brinjes looking over the side; 'sheer off, and take her back to the Stairs. Tell no one what hath been done. Farewell. We sail for the Southern Seas.'

Then I saw that they were hoisting sail. She was a Dutch galliot carrying a main and mizen-mast, with a large gaff mainsail. This, with a flying topsail, and the usual fore-and-aft canvas, would with this wind and tide take her down to the North Foreland very quickly, after which, if the wind still continued fair, she might expect to make the port of Rotterdam in sixteen, or perhaps twenty hours more.

When I had painfully pulled the boat up stream and gotten her back in her place at the Stairs, and was at last in bed, I began to understand fully what had been done—namely, that a great crime had been committed in the rescue of a prisoner sentenced to death, and that, with my two accomplices, I was liable to be tried and—— I fell asleep before I could remember what the punishment would be.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE CONCLUSION.

The next morning my father was astir by six; and I, hearing him, and remembering suddenly what had happened, could sleep no more, but rose quickly, and dressed. He was already in wig and cassock; his clerk in readiness with prayer-book, bible, and the materials wherewith to administer the Supper of the Lord.

'My son,' he said, 'the ministration to a dying man is the most awful part of a clergyman's holy duties; and yet it is that which should most fill him with gratitude and joy. Terrible it is at all times to watch the soul take its flight into the unknown regions: most terrible of all when death comes violently upon one still young and strong and in the prime of his day.'

More he would have said; but here we were interrupted by the arrival of the Admiral himself, borne in an arm-chair by his four negroes, his feet swathed in flannel, and himself wrapped in warm cloaks, for 'twas dangerous for him to leave the warmth of his own room.

'Doctor,' he said, when the men had set him down, 'you are now about to comfort our boy in his last moments.' Here he

paused awhile, the tears running down his cheeks. 'His last moments, poor lad,' he repeated. 'I could not lie still and think that he should die without a word from me. Therefore, though I would not turn his thoughts away from religion, I cannot let him die with never a word from his father's oldest friend. 'Twere inhuman. Tell him, therefore, from me, that I now plainly perceive that he was mad. Other men besides himself have gone mad at sea. I know one who went mad and jumped overboard, in a storm; and another who went mad and ran amuck on the quarter-deck with a cutlass, wounding many before he was disarmed; and another——but no matter. He was mad. Tell him that for the act of God, there is nothing but resignation. The thing might have happened to any. We are fools to feel any shame in it. As for all that went before and that came after his madness, tell him we are proud of him therefore, and we shall remain proud of him. But for his own sake, we are grieved that he was not killed in the recapture of the vessel. Bid him, therefore, meet his death with a calm heart—a brave heart, I know, will not fail him. Take him my last blessing, and my undiminished love. There is no question, tell him, of forgiveness. The act of God must not be questioned. But the pity of it—oh! Doctor—the pity of it!' and with that he fell to weeping like a child.

And then the two old men wept together, but I, who knew what had happened and that there would be no execution that day, had no tears.

They carried back the Admiral and put him to bed again, and I accompanied my father as far as the Stairs. As I returned slowly, my heart full of strange emotions, the bell of St. Paul's began to toll the passing knell. No need to ask for whom that bell was tolling. At the sound the women came to the doors and began to cry, and to talk together, full of pity, the kind-hearted creatures, shrews as they were, and slatterns, and drabs. The old men at the Trinity Hospital were gathered together in their quadrangle, talking of the boy they had known and loved. The Barber and his four 'prentices were busy shaving, the shop full, everybody talking at the same time; and in his doorway stood Mr. Westmoreland, looking up and down the street with troubled face.

'Where is she?' he asked. 'Mr. Luke, where is my Bess?'

'Indeed, Mr. Westmoreland,' I replied, 'where should she be if not in her own bed?'

'She hath not been home all night. I have heard talk of her and Captain Easterbrook. But that poor young man is to be shot this morning. Where can she be? They tell me that she spends the days in his cabin. Sir, you know them both: I' faith he hath played her false. Who would have daughters? Yet if she is all day long with him, needs must that she come ashore in the evening, Mr. Luke. Who, sir, I ask you, would have daughters to plague his old age? I thought she might have stayed at the Apothecary's, and I have knocked, but can make no one hear. Think you that

Mr. Brinjes is dead? He is already of a great old age. This is a terrible morning. That poor young gentleman must die; he must be cut off in the pride of his life and strength, the comeliest man I have ever seen, and he hath stolen my daughter's heart away. Why, what shall I do with her when he is dead? How shall I endure her despair and her grief? how find consolation to assuage her wrath when he is gone?'

I knew very well how that question would be answered. But I could not tell him what had happened.

'It is his passing bell,' the Penman continued. 'Lord, have mercy upon his soul! He is young, and hath doubtless committed some of the sins of youth; the Lord forgive him! He hath often used profane language, and that in my hearing. The Lord forgive him! As for his striking his colours, that will not, I am sure, be laid to his charge. Besides, he hath atoned for this sin by his death. The Lord forgive him for an honest and brave lad! 'Twas once a joy to see him handle his logarithms. Will they bury him in St. Paul's churchyard? Poor lad! Poor lad! What shall I say to Bess to comfort her when she comes home?'

Thus he went on prattling; but I left him.

At the door of Mr. Brinjes' shop stood his assistant, knocking.

'Sir,' he said, 'I am afraid that something hath happened to my master, for I have knocked and cannot make him hear.'

I advised him to wait half an hour or so, and then to knock again.

It was impossible to rest. I went again to the Stairs, where the watermen should be hanging about. There was not one man there, nor a single boat. Round the 'Calypso' there was a great fleet of ships' boats, and Thames boats, all waiting for the execution. People had come down from London—even, they said, as far as from Chelsea—to see the sight. Why, they could see nothing from the river. True, they might have the satisfaction of hearing the roll of the muskets. There never was so great a concourse on the river, even on the day of Horn Fair.

At eight o'clock—the time of execution—everybody listened to hear the rattling of the guns. But there was silence. Presently, I know not how it began, there sprang up a rumour—only a rumour at first—that the sentence would not be carried out that morning; then it became certain that there would be no execution at all; and it was spread abroad that at the last moment the Captain had been respited. About eleven o'clock the boats dispersed and returned again, the people disappointed. It was not until later that it was known—because at first no one, not even my father and his clerk, were allowed to leave the ship—that Captain Easterbrook could not be shot because he could not be found.

I found the Apothecary's shop open—they had broken in at the back—and the assistant was mixing medicines and prescribing.

'Sir,' he said, 'my master is gone. He hath not slept in his bed. He hath taken his money and his charts, but nothing else.'

'His money and his charts? How do you know that he has taken his money?'

'I know where he kept it and I looked to see if it was gone. Because, I said, if my master's money is still there, he will return. But it is gone; therefore I know that he has gone.'

'Whither hath he gone, sirrah?'

'I know not, sir; any more'—here he looked mighty cunning—'than I know whither Captain Easterbrook hath gone, or Bess Westmoreland, or what you were doing with my master and Bess on the Stairs last night at nine o'clock.'

Now, I have never learned if this man knew more than the fact that we were upon the Stairs at that time. Certainly, he could not know the whole truth.

'I think,' I said, 'that if I were you I would continue to carry on the business without asking any questions, until your master returns.'

'I will, sir,' he replied; and he did. His master did not return, and this fortunate young man succeeded to a good stock and a flourishing trade, and would doubtless have become rich but for the accident of being killed by a drunken sailor.

When it became known that Mr. Brinjes, Bess, and the Captain had all disappeared on the same evening, it was impossible not to connect these three events; and all the world believed (what was perfectly true) that the girl had run away with the Captain, and that Mr. Brinjes had gone, too, out of pure affection for them.

The Admiral presently recovered from his attack, but he went no more to the Sir John Falstaff, and entirely lost his former spirits; and, as I have already said, within a year or two was carried off by an attack of gout in the stomach. Shortly afterwards I was so happy as to win the affections of Castilla. She informed me that, although she was carried away by natural pride in so gallant a wooer as Jack, she had never felt for him such an assurance in his constancy as is necessary to secure happiness, and that when she heard of his infatuated passion for so common a creature as Bess Westmoreland, she was thankful for her release, though she deplored the sad cause of it. 'We no longer,' she often says, 'burn women for witchcraft, but such a girl as Bess, who can so bewitch a gallant man as to make him invoke the curse of Heaven upon himself if he prove inconstant, and thereby bring him to shame and disgrace, ought to be punished in some condign and exemplary manner.' It is not my practice to argue with my wife, especially on points where we are not likely to agree; and as Bess will probably never return, and cannot, therefore, be punished, Castilla may say anything she please about her. For my own part, my heart has always been with that poor girl, who did not seek for or expect the honour of Jack's affections, and whose witchery was in her beauty and her black eyes.

On the conclusion of peace in 1762, Aaron Fletcher, with many

other Marines, was disbanded, but he was afraid to venture back into Deptford, where his creditors would have arrested him. I know not for a certainty what he did to bring the arm of the law upon him; but I know what became of him. For one day, being at Limehouse, I saw going along the road on the way to the Stairs, where were waiting several ships' boats, a dismal company of convicts, for embarkation to the plantations of Jamaica, or Barbadoes, or some other West Indian Island. There were at least a hundred of them, walking two and two, handcuffed in pairs. Some of these were in rags, some shaking with prison fever, some dejected, some angry and mutinous, some were singing—there are wretches so hardened that they will sing ribald songs on their way even to the gallows. One there was of appearance and bearing superior to the rest, by whose side there walked a young woman, his wife or mistress, bearing a baby, and crying bitterly; another, beside whom walked a grave and sober citizen, the brother or cousin of the convict, the tears in his eyes. But mostly there were no friends or relations to mourn over this outcast crew. And at the head marched a band of fifes and drums, playing 'Through the woods, laddie'; and a crowd of boys followed, whooping and hallooing. When the procession was nearly past, I was surprised to see among the men, handcuffed together, no other than Aaron Fletcher and Mr. Jonathan Rayment, the crimp. The latter was pale, and his fat cheeks shook, and all his limbs trembled with fever. 'Twould have been merciful to let him lie till death should carry him off. But Aaron walked upright, looking about him with eyes full of mutiny and murder. I know not if he saw me; but the procession filed past, and the band went on playing at the head of the Stairs while the wretches embarked on board the boats. As for the crimes which Aaron and his companion had committed, I do not know what they were, but I suspect kidnapping formed part. I have never learnt what became of Mr. Rayment; but concerning Aaron there afterwards came intelligence that he could not brook the overseer's lash and the hot sun, and fled, with intent to join the wild Maroons, but was followed by bloodhounds, and pursued, and, being brought back to his master, was naturally flogged. He then sickened of a calenture and died. He was a bad man; but he was punished for his sins. Indeed, it is most true that the way of transgressors is hard.

Lastly, to complete this narrative, I must tell you of a message which came to me five or six years after the court-martial. It was brought even from the Southern Seas. Heard one ever of a message or letter from that remote and unknown part?

There was a certain wild fellow, Deptford born, Will Acorn by name. This young man, for sins of his which need not delay us, left his native town, where he had been brought up as a shipwright, and went to sea. Nor did he come back again for several years, when he reappeared, the old business being now blown over and forgotten. And presently he came to my house, I then living in

St. Martin Street for convenience of business, and told me a strange story.

With some other privateers of Jamaica, where these fellows are mostly found, he must needs try his fortune in the South Seas. Accordingly, they got possession of a brig, or barcolongo, as they call this kind of ship in the West Indies, and they armed her with certain carronades and peteraroes, and to the number of eighty or ninety stout men, all fully armed, put out to sea. In short, they proposed to go a-pirating among the Spanish settlements, as many have done before them.

It matters not here what was the success of their voyage—Will Acorn, at least, returned home in a very ragged and penniless condition. This, however, was the man's story.

'We sighted one morning at daybreak, being then not far from Masa Fuera, a large brigantine flying Spanish colours. She was much too big for us to tackle, therefore we hoisted the Spanish flag, too, and bore away, hoping that she would let us alone, and go on her own course. But that would not suit her, neither, and she fired a shot across our bows, as a signal to back sail. This we did, expecting nothing short of hanging, for she carried thirty guns at least, and we could see that she was well manned, and looked as if she was handled by a French Captain, under whom even a Creolian Spanish crew will fight. Well, she spoke us when she was near enough, and ordered, in Spanish, that the Captain was to come aboard. Now, as I was the only man who had any Spanish, our Captain bade me come with him. So I went; and we thought we were going to instant death, the Spaniards being born devils when they get an English crew in their power.

'Sir,' this honest fellow continued, 'think of our astonishment when, on climbing the vessel's side, they ran up the pirate's flag; to be sure, we were little else than pirates ourselves; but we knew not what countrymen these were. As for the crew, they were nearly all black negroes, and a devilish fighting lot they looked, being armed with pistols and cutlasses, while the decks were cleared for action, and every man to quarters, and the whole as neat and clean as aboard a British man-o'-war. And on the quarter-deck there stood, glass in hand, none other than Captain Easterbrook himself, the same as was tried by court-martial, sentenced, and escaped. He was dressed very fine, in crimson silk, with a gold chain, and pistols in his belt. I knew him directly; but his face is changed, for now it is the face of one who gives no quarter. A fiercer face I never saw anywhere.

'But the strangest thing was that I saw lying in the sun, propped up by pillows and cushions, the old Deptford Apothecary, Mr. Brinjes. He looked no older, and no younger; his one eye twinkling and winking, and his face covered with wrinkles.

'"Will Acorn, ahoy!" he sings out. "Will Acorn, by the Lord!"

'When he said this there came out from the Captain's cabin a

most splendid lady, dressed in all the satins and silks you can think of, with gold chains round her neck, and jewels sparkling in her hair. Behind her came two black women, holding a silken sunshade over her head. Why, Sir, 'twas none other than Bess Westmoreland, the Penman's daughter, and more beautiful than ever, though her cheek was pale, and her eyes were somewhat anxious.

'"Will Acorn?" she cried. "Is that Will Acorn, of Deptford Town?"

'So with that the Captain called us from the poop. "Hark ye," he said, "you seem to be Englishmen. What ship is yours?"

'So we told him who we were, and why we were cruising in those seas. He listened—'tis a terrible fighting face—and heard us out, and then bade us drink and go our way.

'"I war not with Englishmen," he said; "but for French and Spaniard I know no quarter."

'He said no more, but his lady—Bess Westmoreland that was—stepped out to us, and asked me many questions about Deptford folk. And then she put into my hands this parcel, which I faithfully promised to deliver into your hands, Sir, should I ever return home again. And I was to tell you that they had found Mr. Brinjes' island, and she was as happy as she could expect to be. And then Mr. Brinjes lifted his head, and said, in a piping voice, "And tell him," he said, with his one eye like a burning coal, "tell Luke Anguish, man, that we committed the town of Guayaquil to the flames. 'Twould have done his heart good to see the town on fire, and the Spaniards roasting like so many heretics at the stake!"'

This was the message. The parcel contained a gold chain and cross, set with precious stones, which I gave to Castilla, hoping thereby to make her think less hardly of poor Bess. But in vain; though she wears the chain, which, she says—though this is not the case—was sent to her by Captain Easterbrook, in token of his repentance, and of his unhappiness with the woman who bewitched him, and of his continual sorrow for the loss of her own hand.

It is now more than thirty years ago, and since then we have heard nothing more. I conjecture that either they have long since been swallowed up in a hurricane, Bess dying, as she wished, at the same moment as Jack, or that they are still living somewhere in those warm and sunny islands of which the Apothecary was never wearied of discoursing.

THE END

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